Literal Differences Between the Qur'an Compared to the Hebrew Bible and Christian Bible

Jan Lavrinovski

All rights reserved

Contents

The Three Books and Their Claims..... 1
The Creation of Man..... 6
The Fall and Expulsion..... 12
Abraham and the Sacrificial Son..... 18
Noah and the Deluge..... 24
Moses and Pharaoh..... 29
The Ten Commandments and Divine Law..... 36
Jesus – Prophet, Son, or God?..... 42
Mary and Her Story..... 48
Satan, Sin, and Human Accountability..... 54
The Last Day and Judgment..... 59
Rituals and Worship..... 65
Women and Their Roles..... 71
Divine Names and Their Power..... 77
One Origin, Many Tongues..... 83

The Three Books and Their Claims

To the casual observer, the Hebrew Bible, the Christian Bible, and the Qur'an may seem like variations of a shared spiritual heritage, a trilogy of divine communication echoing across centuries. But beneath their surface similarities—common patriarchs, overlapping ethics, and reverence for the sacred—lies a complex tension of origin, authority, and identity. Each book presents itself not simply as a holy text, but as the record of ultimate truth, revealed by God to a chosen people, in a chosen language, for a chosen moment in human history.

The Hebrew Bible, known within Judaism as the Tanakh, is the foundational scripture of the Jewish people. Composed over a millennium and canonized in stages, it declares itself the revealed word of YHWH to Israel. It is deeply rooted in a national history: a covenant between a deity and a specific lineage, born through Abraham, sealed through Moses, and maintained through exile and return. Its authority lies in its antiquity, its continuity of tradition, and its claim of direct divine law-giving at Sinai. Its status is sacred, but also cultural and communal—a guide to life as much as to belief.

The Christian Bible expands upon this heritage but redirects its trajectory. Incorporating the Hebrew scriptures as its "Old Testament," it adds the New Testament: a collection of Gospels, letters, and apocalyptic visions centered on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Here, the claim shifts. Jesus is not only a prophet, but the incarnate Word—God become man—and the fulfillment of all that came before. The Christian Bible presents itself not just as revelation, but as culmination. It reinterprets the Hebrew past as a series of divine signposts pointing toward Christ. Its authority, therefore, comes not from continuity alone, but from perceived fulfillment. Its canon closes with the idea that the veil has been torn and the ultimate truth has been revealed.

The Qur'an, by contrast, presents itself as the final and uncorrupted revelation. Delivered to the Prophet Muhammad over twenty-three years in 7th-century Arabia, it claims neither to be a sequel nor an adaptation, but a restoration. It asserts that previous scriptures were genuine but have been distorted (tahrif) over time by human hands. The Qur'an places itself as the preserved word of God (Allah), unaltered and protected, spoken in Arabic, and intended not for a tribe or nation alone, but for all humanity. It recognizes Moses and Jesus, among others, as prophets—but denies their scriptures' current forms as pure or complete. In doing so, the Qur'an offers a theological inversion: affirming continuity of message while rejecting the textual integrity of its predecessors. Its authority is derived not from historical lineage, but from claimed textual purity and divine preservation.

These three books, then, are not three versions of the same message. They are competing claims about what God has said, to whom, and how reliably. They differ in origin—written in Hebrew, Greek, and Arabic. They differ in narrative structure—law, gospel, and recitation. And most of all, they differ in status. One claims firstness and covenant, one claims fulfillment and incarnation, and one claims correction and finality. Their stories may overlap,

but their voices do not harmonize. Each asserts itself as the true articulation of the divine. Each speaks not with echo, but with contrast. And from these contrasts, we begin our exploration—not of belief, but of literal text.

The Tanakh, or Hebrew Bible, stands as both a spiritual and cultural cornerstone for the Jewish people. Its name is an acronym drawn from its three primary divisions: Torah (Law), Nevi'im (Prophets), and Ketuvim (Writings). These texts, written and compiled across centuries, do not merely recount religious instruction or philosophical musings—they root an entire people's identity in divine covenant, ancestral lineage, and sacred history. The Tanakh does not begin with belief—it begins with a family, a land, and a promise.

At its core lies the covenant: a divine pact between YHWH and Abraham, extended through Isaac, Jacob, and finally ratified through Moses at Sinai. This covenant is not abstract. It is territorial, genealogical, and legal. God promises land and descendants; in return, the people are to live according to His commandments. The Torah—the first five books—details this relationship in origin stories, laws, and national formation. Genesis establishes the patriarchs not merely as religious figures, but as the literal forefathers of Israel. Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy present law as a lived reality, not merely spiritual guidance but civil code, cultic prescription, and ethical compass.

The Nevi'im continues the story, transitioning from the conquest of the Promised Land to the era of kings, prophets, and national decline. Here, prophecy is not foretelling, but forthtelling—a call to return to the covenant in times of crisis. Figures like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel warn, rebuke, and occasionally comfort, all within the frame of Israel's fidelity to its God and its law. These prophetic texts are inseparable from the land, the temple, and the people's fortunes. They are a mirror to history, interpreted through divine will.

The Ketuvim, the final section, is more diverse: psalms of worship, proverbs of wisdom, reflections on suffering and joy, and post-exilic chronicles of return. Yet even here, ancestry and covenant remain central. Whether through the poetry of David, the trials of Job, or the rebuilding efforts under Ezra and Nehemiah, the Tanakh insists on the continuity of God's purpose with Israel. The sacred is not above history—it is embedded within it.

Unlike later scriptures that universalize or spiritualize the divine-human relationship, the Tanakh roots it in specific events, people, and places. It is a book of land and lineage, not merely of salvation or doctrine. God's promises are traced through genealogies. Holiness is expressed through ritual. Identity is preserved through remembrance. The sacred history of the Jews is not abstract philosophy—it is memory, inheritance, and obligation, codified in a language and literature that define who they are and why they exist.

Thus, the Tanakh is not only a religious text. It is the constitution of a people. Its stories are not only believed; they are lived, mourned, celebrated, and reenacted across generations. Its authority comes not through reinterpretation, but through faithful transmission. And it stands not as a universal invitation, but as a divine contract—one that begins with Abraham and never forgets his name.

The Christian Bible builds upon the foundation of the Hebrew scriptures but reshapes their architecture and reorients their meaning. It does so by pairing the Old Testament—a collection closely aligned in content with the Jewish Tanakh—with the New Testament, a body of writings that claims to complete and fulfill what came before. This expansion is not merely additive; it is transformative. Where the Hebrew Bible ends with a covenant between God and Israel, the Christian scriptures declare a new covenant, extended to all nations, mediated not through law, but through the person of Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament, as framed in the Christian tradition, is restructured to support this forward-looking trajectory. The books are arranged not by Jewish canonical divisions but by narrative flow: beginning with creation, followed by history, poetry, and prophecy that culminates in anticipation. The final book of the Christian Old Testament is often one of the prophetic texts, such as Malachi, which speaks of a coming messenger—setting the stage for the Gospel of Matthew and the arrival of Christ. This structural decision alone signals theological intent: the old points toward the new.

The New Testament, written in Greek, introduces an entirely new phase of revelation. It opens with the four Gospels—narratives of Jesus' life, teachings, crucifixion, and resurrection. These accounts frame Jesus as the fulfillment of the Hebrew scriptures: the Messiah promised to Israel, yet rejected by many of his own. The writers quote liberally from the Old Testament, often reinterpreting passages to show prophetic alignment. Verses that once referred to Israel’s trials or kings are now said to find their true meaning in the life of Jesus. In this way, the Old Testament is read not in its own historical voice, but as a prelude to incarnation.

Beyond the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles narrates the spread of the Christian message through the early Church. The Epistles—letters by Paul and others—further develop the theology of this new faith. They speak of justification by faith, the death of Christ as atonement, and a redefinition of law through grace. Here, the Jewish covenant is not abolished, but absorbed into a larger universal framework. Gentiles need not follow Mosaic law to belong to God’s people; they are grafted into the promise through Christ, who is seen as the final priest, the ultimate sacrifice, and the eternal king.

At the heart of this transformation is the doctrine of incarnation. Jesus is not presented as a prophet or messenger alone, but as the Logos—the Word made flesh. He is the visible image of the invisible God, the divine entering human history in bodily form. This claim sets the Christian Bible apart from both the Hebrew Bible and the Qur’an. The divine is no longer distant, nor solely transcendent—it becomes immanent, present, and personal.

The Christian Bible, therefore, is a scripture of expansion. It begins with the particularity of Israel and ends with a message to the world. It redefines fulfillment not as return to the law, but as its transcendence. The Hebrew prophets are reread through the lens of messiahship; the laws are spiritualized; and the promises to Israel are extended to all who believe. This theological shift—from covenantal ancestry to universal redemption—is not simply a matter of interpretation. It is a new literary and doctrinal construct, expressed through texts that claim not just to interpret scripture, but to embody its final truth.

Thus, the Christian Bible speaks in two testaments, but with one message: that the divine has entered the world through Christ, and that in him, the scattered fragments of ancient prophecy have found their completion. It is this claim of incarnation and fulfillment that sets the Christian canon on a path distinct from both its predecessors and its successors.

The Qur'an enters the scriptural conversation not as an addition to the previous texts, nor as a reinterpretation from within their frameworks, but as a divine correction—a final revelation that claims to restore what had been obscured, distorted, or lost. It presents itself as the unchanged and unchangeable word of God, revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in the Arabic language over a span of twenty-three years. Unlike the layered compilation of the Hebrew Bible or the multi-authored composition of the Christian canon, the Qur'an is delivered with a singular voice and a singular claim: that it is the final and complete articulation of divine will.

Where the Hebrew Bible roots its authority in covenant and ancestry, and the Christian Bible in fulfillment and incarnation, the Qur'an bases its claim on purity and preservation. It repeatedly asserts that it confirms what was revealed before—namely, the Torah and the Gospel—but that those previous scriptures have suffered alteration (tahrif). This alteration, according to the Qur'an, occurred not in origin but in transmission: human hands changed the meanings, rewrote the laws, and misunderstood the prophets. In contrast, the Qur'an positions itself as safeguarded by God, shielded from error, and transmitted word-for-word without the corruption of human mediation.

The Qur'an's content reflects this stance. It retells many of the same stories found in the earlier scriptures—Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus—but always with shifts in detail, emphasis, and outcome. These changes are not presented as reinterpretations; they are presented as corrections. Where earlier narratives may attribute fatigue or regret to God, the Qur'an eliminates all anthropomorphism. Where previous texts speak of divine sons or human intercessors, the Qur'an reasserts pure monotheism: God is one, without partner, parent, or offspring.

This process of purification is central to the Qur'an's self-understanding. It critiques the theological extrapolations of both Jews and Christians—accusing the former of breaking the covenant and distorting scripture, and the latter of elevating Jesus beyond his station. It names both communities "People of the Book," recognizing their foundational role in receiving revelation, but insists that the final truth now resides in the Qur'an alone. The previous scriptures are acknowledged in spirit, but judged incomplete or compromised in form.

Rectification also shapes the Qur'an's approach to narrative. The stories of prophets are reframed not as historical accounts alone, but as moral exemplars—less focused on chronology than on guidance. Each retelling is tailored to reinforce belief, obedience, and the oneness of God. The Qur'an does not trace a national history, nor does it build a legal genealogy. It reveals, warns, and instructs, always with the immediacy of divine address. It speaks not of covenants with a chosen people, but of a universal call to submission (Islam) and remembrance (dhikr).

The status of the Qur'an, then, is not that of one scripture among others, but of the final and decisive word. It does not enter the chain of revelation as a later volume—it ends the chain. Its authority is not derived from what came before, but from what it claims to be: a recitation (Qur'an) directly from the divine, preserved in heaven, and transmitted without blemish. It is the culmination of all scripture, not through historical continuation, but through theological correction.

In this way, the Qur'an rewrites the role of revelation itself. It is not an evolving dialogue across centuries; it is a definitive pronouncement. It purifies what was tainted, completes what was partial, and returns the human heart to the singular, uncompromising worship of the one true God. Its finality is not merely a matter of sequence—it is a matter of truth.

This book does not seek to resolve the theological claims of the Hebrew Bible, the Christian Bible, or the Qur'an. It does not argue for the truth of one faith over another, nor does it attempt to disprove or defend any tradition's beliefs. Instead, it focuses on a narrower, more tangible aim: to examine the literal differences between these three scriptures—what their texts actually say, word by word, line by line, story by story.

By "literal," we mean the explicit content of the scriptures as they appear in their canonical forms: what is included, what is omitted, how phrases are structured, and where narratives align or diverge. We are not concerned here with how later interpreters explained these texts, nor with how doctrines developed in rabbinic, patristic, or Islamic commentary. This is not a book of theology. It is a study in scriptural language, comparison, and contradiction.

The approach is comparative, but not general. We will not summarize entire traditions, but instead select precise verses and stories that exist across the three scriptures and hold them side by side. When Adam is created, what does each book say? When Abraham lifts the knife, who lies on the altar? When Jesus is born, what titles are used? These questions are not abstract—they are textual. Our interest is not in what a religion believes these events to mean, but in what the original scripture says happened.

This method allows for clarity. It bypasses centuries of doctrinal interpretation and takes us to the root of each tradition's sacred record. It also allows us to see how stories evolve—or resist evolution—across time and tradition. In doing so, it reveals patterns: where one scripture preserves ambiguity, another clarifies; where one expands, another contracts; where one emphasizes humanity, another divinity. These differences are not accidental. They reflect the editorial, theological, and linguistic worlds in which each scripture took shape.

To ensure fairness, each scripture will be treated on its own terms, using standard academic translations and, where necessary, references to the original languages—Biblical Hebrew, Koine Greek, and Classical Arabic. We acknowledge that translation itself is a layer of interpretation, but our focus will remain on the best-established textual renderings. Where variant readings exist, especially in ancient manuscripts or among sectarian canons, these will be noted for their relevance.

Our goal is not to declare one book right and the others wrong. It is to let each speak clearly, and in doing so, to show how three sacred texts, often linked in public imagination as if they were versions of the same divine voice, are in fact structured by different languages, different claims, and different visions of the human encounter with God.

From here, we will move chapter by chapter through the most pivotal and overlapping stories of the Hebrew Bible, the Christian scriptures, and the Qur'an. We will compare their words—not their commentaries. We will ask what each says—not what believers say it means. And in that space of text, unadorned and uncompromised, the differences will speak for themselves.

The Creation of Man

The story of humanity's beginning in the Hebrew Bible opens not with a single voice, but with two parallel accounts woven together—two versions of creation that differ in order, focus, and tone, yet stand side by side in the Book of Genesis. These accounts, found in Genesis chapters 1 and 2, are often read as one seamless narrative. But upon closer inspection, they reveal distinct theological emphases and differing portrayals of the creation of man.

The first account, found in Genesis 1:1–2:3, is structured with deliberate rhythm and symmetry. Creation unfolds in six days, marked by repeated refrains—"And God said," "And it was so," and "God saw that it was good." Light precedes celestial bodies, land emerges from water, life springs forth in stages. Humanity appears last, on the sixth day, as the climax of the created order. Here, man and woman are created simultaneously, and their creation is framed in majestic and abstract terms:

"So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." (Genesis 1:27)

The phrase "image of God" has long been the subject of theological reflection, but within the Hebrew text it carries a tone of elevation. Humanity is not just a product of dust and breath, but a reflection of the divine. This likeness is followed by a mandate: to be fruitful, multiply, subdue the earth, and have dominion over other creatures. Creation is ordered, complete, and culminates in rest. On the seventh day, God ceases from labor and sanctifies the day, instituting divine rest not out of fatigue, but as a cosmic rhythm.

The second account, beginning in Genesis 2:4, shifts dramatically. The style is more intimate, the sequence altered. Man is formed not last, but first—fashioned from the dust of the earth and animated by the breath of life. Woman comes later, drawn from the man's side, as a counterpart rather than a simultaneous creation. The focus here is not cosmic order but personal relationship. The Garden of Eden is planted, not spoken into being. God walks, speaks, molds, and reacts. The divine is less distant and more involved, shaping the world by hand rather than decree.

In this second account, the purpose of man is relational: to tend the garden, to name the animals, and to find companionship. The creation of woman is not framed in terms of dominion or command, but as a solution to the man's solitude. The image of God is not repeated here, nor is the seven-day structure preserved. Instead, the narrative ends not with divine rest, but with the union of man and woman and the naming of their nakedness without shame.

The juxtaposition of these two accounts—majestic order and earthy intimacy—suggests that Genesis is not offering a scientific explanation or even a harmonized history. It is providing layered theology. The first emphasizes humanity's exalted status; the second, humanity's fragility and need. Both accounts shape the foundational Jewish understanding of mankind: as both sovereign and servant, divine image-bearer and earth-born creature.

Most significantly for our study, Genesis ends its first creation account with divine rest: "And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day." (Genesis 2:2) This notion of rest (Shabbat) becomes central to Jewish identity and law. It marks the rhythm of sacred time, rooted in the act of God Himself. Neither the Christian New Testament nor the Qur'an will replicate this divine pause in the same way. As we shall see, the idea that God rests is not universal—and in later scriptures, it will be either spiritualized or rejected altogether.

But in Genesis, man is born in the image of God, set in motion by breath and word, and placed between heaven and earth. Two stories, one origin, and already the foundation of a unique and literal divergence.

In the Christian New Testament, the story of humanity's creation is not recounted anew but reinterpreted through the figure of Jesus Christ. While the Gospels offer no alternative creation narrative, the Apostle Paul, particularly in his letter to the Romans, presents a profound theological reframing of Adam—not merely as the first man, but as a symbolic counterpart to Christ. This is not a retelling of Genesis; it is a theological overlay that casts the origin of sin and salvation as a mirrored arc, with Adam and Christ at either end.

Romans 5 is the central passage for this reinterpretation. Paul introduces a duality: Adam, through whose disobedience sin entered the world, and Christ, through whose obedience grace and life are restored. The text reads:

"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned…" (Romans 5:12)

Paul positions Adam not merely as the first human but as the conduit through which a universal condition—sin and death—was transmitted. This is the foundation for what Christian theology will later formalize as original sin: the idea that all humanity inherits a fallen nature due to Adam's initial transgression. This concept, absent in the Hebrew Bible, becomes central in the Christian narrative of redemption.

But Paul's aim is not to dwell on Adam's failure. Rather, he contrasts Adam with Christ, calling Jesus the "second Adam" or the one who undoes the curse introduced by the first:

“For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace… reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!” (Romans 5:17)

Here, Christ becomes a new archetype. Where Adam brought condemnation, Christ brings justification. Where Adam introduced mortality, Christ offers eternal life. This typology transforms the creation narrative from an isolated origin story into the beginning of a cosmic drama, one that necessitates Christ as its resolution. The literal man Adam becomes a symbolic figure, whose actions affect all, just as Christ’s actions offer salvation to all.

This reading is echoed elsewhere in the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians 15:22, Paul writes, “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” Again, the dichotomy is emphasized—not as a biological or mythic tale, but as a theological structure. Adam is not simply a figure of the past; he is the mirror in which Christ’s mission is understood.

What the New Testament does, then, is to spiritualize the Genesis creation account. It does not dispute the literal text but reorients its significance. The image of God in man becomes secondary to the image of man redeemed through Christ. The garden becomes a stage for the fall, and the cross becomes the counterpoint.

This transformation is not present in the Hebrew Bible. There, Adam is a man shaped from dust, not a symbol of fallen humanity. Sin is not inherited but committed. The New Testament, by contrast, takes the Genesis material and stretches its meaning forward into the life of Jesus, reading history as prophecy and turning origin into destiny.

Thus, in the Christian scriptures, the creation of man is not simply about beginnings—it is about parallels. Adam is the shadow; Christ is the fulfillment. The fall is the cause; the crucifixion, the cure. And in this reinterpretation, the figure of Adam is lifted from the soil of Genesis and placed at the foundation of a new theological edifice, one where salvation begins not at Sinai, but in Eden.

The Qur’an presents the creation of man in language that is both vivid and stripped of metaphorical adornments found in other scriptures. Its narrative is dispersed across multiple chapters, and while it revisits the figure of Adam frequently, it never does so in linear or storybook form. Instead, the Qur’an conveys creation in fragments—statements of fact, divine speech, and rhetorical reminders—focused less on chronology and more on the act of divine will. Man is made, not in God’s image, but by His command, from earthbound material shaped into sentience.

The Qur’an repeatedly emphasizes that man was created from clay, mud, or dust. These variations are not contradictions but expressions of the raw, earthly substance from which humanity originates. In Surah 23:12–14, the stages are articulated clearly:

“We created man from an extract of clay. Then We placed him as a drop of fluid in a safe lodging. Then We made the drop into a clinging clot, and We made the clot into a lump, and We made the lump into bones, and We clothed the bones with flesh. Then We developed him into another creation. So blessed is Allah, the best of creators.”

Here, creation is both anatomical and ordered—a biological progression through which man is formed. This layered description stands in contrast to the concise act in Genesis and the symbolic parallel of the New Testament. There is no divine image here, no sanctified rest, no cosmic rhythm. Creation is neither artistic nor reflective; it is procedural and decisive.

Elsewhere, in Surah 15:28–29, Allah declares to the angels:

"I am creating a human being from clay, from molded mud. And when I have fashioned him and breathed into him of My spirit, fall down in prostration to him."

The act of breathing spirit into man resembles the Genesis account, but the context diverges. This breath is not framed as the imparting of a divine image, but as a sign of honor and distinction bestowed by the Creator. Man is not made in God's likeness; God is unlike anything. This theological stance is central to Islamic belief: Allah is unique, beyond comparison, and completely transcendent. The Qur'an explicitly rejects anthropomorphic language. There is no "image of God" doctrine—no resemblance between the divine and the human.

Moreover, the Qur'an never describes God resting after creation. In fact, it denies such an idea. In Surah 50:38, it states:

"We created the heavens and the earth and what is between them in six days, and no fatigue touched Us."

This is a direct counterpoint to the Genesis account, which concludes creation with divine rest. The Qur'an asserts God's absolute power and independence, rejecting any implication that creation could impose limitation or require recuperation. The divine act is effortless, spoken into being by the command "Be," and it is.

The Qur'anic depiction of man's origin thus emphasizes submission over sovereignty, humility over dominion. Man is honored, yes, but also warned. His creation is not a crown, but a trust. The purpose of his existence is to serve, remember, and submit—not to reflect or represent the divine essence.

In this way, the Qur'an's portrayal of the creation of man departs in tone, texture, and theology from both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. There is no dual creation account, no divine rest, and no shared essence between man and God. The divergence is not merely stylistic—it is doctrinal. Man is made, not mirrored. He is created to worship, not to resemble. And in these distinctions, the Qur'an reframes the beginning of humanity not as an echo of earlier texts, but as a purified account from the mouth of God Himself.

The question of why man was created—what role he is meant to play within the cosmos—receives distinctly different answers in the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'an. While both scriptures affirm man's uniqueness among creation, the purpose assigned to that uniqueness diverges in language, tone, and theological weight. In the Hebrew Bible, man is granted dominion; in the Qur'an, man is appointed as a khalifa—a vicegerent or steward. These are

not merely different terms—they reflect fundamentally different worldviews about humanity's role under divine authority.

In the Genesis creation narrative, the purpose of man is made explicit upon his formation. Genesis 1:28 states:

"Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every living thing that moves on the earth."

Here, dominion is conferred as a divine mandate. Humanity is to rule the earth, to subdue its elements, and to govern the other forms of life. This notion has long shaped the Jewish and Christian understanding of human agency: that man, made in God's image, is to act as a sovereign within creation, reflecting divine order through civilization, law, and command. The earth is not merely a dwelling—it is a kingdom entrusted to man's control.

In contrast, the Qur'an introduces a very different concept when it describes Adam. In Surah 2:30, God announces to the angels:

"Indeed, I will make upon the earth a khalifa."

The Arabic term *khalifa* denotes a deputy, successor, or steward—one who acts on behalf of another's authority, not as an independent ruler. The appointment of man as khalifa does not imply dominion in the Genesis sense. It implies responsibility, trust, and accountability. Man is not crowned king of the earth; he is assigned a role that comes with moral weight and divine oversight.

The angels' response is telling. They ask:

"Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we glorify You with praise and sanctify You?"

God replies not with explanation, but with mystery: "Indeed, I know that which you do not know."

This exchange reveals the Qur'an's deeper frame. Man's position is not granted because of his power, but because of his potential—his capacity for knowledge, moral choice, and remembrance. He is a free agent, entrusted with duties, tested through temptation, and guided by revelation. The Qur'anic man is never autonomous. He is a servant (*abd*), even as he holds stewardship. The earth is a trust (*amana*), not a possession.

Where Genesis frames man as a ruler, the Qur'an frames him as a guardian. Where the Bible begins with authority, the Qur'an begins with accountability. In the Biblical model, man's downfall comes from disobedience within a dominion. In the Qur'anic model, the fall is a lapse in trust, not a loss of rank. Man remains khalifa even after being cast out of the garden, continuing his role as steward on earth, guided by divine commands.

The difference is subtle yet profound. Dominion emphasizes control; vicegerency emphasizes service. Dominion places man over creation; vicegerency places him within it, under God.

This divergence shapes the ethics that flow from each scripture. One leans toward mastery and cultivation; the other toward humility and submission. Both recognize man's significance—but they disagree on what that significance demands.

Thus, while Genesis and the Qur'an both exalt man as a central figure in creation, they define his purpose through different mandates. He is to rule—or he is to serve. He is to conquer—or to guard. And in this linguistic and literal distinction, two visions of humanity take root: one shaped by dominion, the other by delegation.

Across the Hebrew Bible, the Christian New Testament, and the Qur'an, the creation of man stands as a shared anchor point. Yet when examined closely, their texts diverge in precise, literal ways—differences not merely of emphasis or tone, but of sequence, agency, and the very anthropology each scripture promotes. These divergences are not interpretive disputes; they exist plainly in the words, in the structure of the narratives, and in the theological architecture embedded within the lines.

In terms of sequence, Genesis offers two back-to-back creation accounts. The first places humanity at the pinnacle of a structured, seven-day process where man and woman are created simultaneously. The second rewinds the order: man is made before plants, before animals, and only later is woman formed from his side. These accounts present a layered, sometimes conflicting chronology that has long invited harmonization. In contrast, the Qur'an never presents a singular, linear order. Instead, it speaks of creation in parts—man from clay, man as a clot, man shaped and breathed into—distributed across dozens of verses. It is a mosaic of stages rather than a timeline of days. The Qur'an affirms that creation occurred in six days but explicitly rejects any notion of divine fatigue or rest. Thus, what Genesis closes with as a sanctified pause, the Qur'an treats as a theological impossibility.

Agency also differs. In Genesis, God speaks and creation obeys—"Let there be" is followed by light. In the second account, God molds man from dust with His hands and breathes life directly into his nostrils. There is touch, form, and intimacy. In the Qur'an, the shaping of man is similarly physical—fashioned from clay, shaped into form—but always followed by the command *kun* ("Be"), indicating divine speech as final authority. Yet God's breath into man is not about animation alone—it is about bestowing honor. The Qur'an includes a cosmic moment where angels are ordered to bow before Adam, a scene absent in the Hebrew Bible. The agency here is layered: God creates, commands, and tests, while angels witness and submit. The anthropology is not just physical—it is hierarchical and spiritual.

Anthropology—the understanding of what man is—presents perhaps the starkest literal difference. In Genesis, man is created in the "image of God," a phrase that suggests resemblance, representation, or reflection. This idea is foundational to Jewish and Christian thought, informing doctrines of dignity, reason, and moral agency. The New Testament deepens this by presenting Christ as the image of the invisible God and mankind's redemption as a restoration of that image.

The Qur'an categorically rejects any notion of divine resemblance. God is not like His creation in any respect. There is no "image of Allah" in man. Instead, human uniqueness lies

in knowledge, moral freedom, and the capacity to remember the Creator. Man is not a miniature god, but a servant with responsibility. He is a khalifa—not a copy of God, but His representative on earth, bound to obedience. This denial of anthropomorphism is central to Qur'anic theology and marks a direct textual divergence from the Genesis account.

Thus, the creation of man is a point of overlap only at first glance. One scripture presents a dual narrative, another a typological mirror, and the third a patchwork of precise declarations. In Genesis, man is crowned with dominion; in the New Testament, Adam becomes a symbol of sin and Christ a symbol of new life; in the Qur'an, man is shaped from dust and burdened with trust. Sequence, agency, and anthropology—three literal layers—divide these texts in structure and in soul. And in that divergence, the nature of humanity, its role, and its origin are told anew in each scripture's voice.

The Fall and Expulsion

In the Hebrew Bible, the narrative of humanity's fall unfolds in Genesis chapter 3, a turning point that shifts the human story from innocence to exile. The setting is the Garden of Eden—a space of abundance and safety, where the first man and woman live without shame, clothed only in divine favor. But this peace is interrupted not by war or disaster, but by a conversation—one that begins with a question and ends with a curse. At the center of the story is a serpent, a tree, and the woman who listens.

The text begins with a simple yet charged observation: "Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made." (Genesis 3:1) This serpent, though unnamed and unexplained, speaks. He addresses the woman, not the man. His question is sly, not outright falsehood: "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" In her response, Eve affirms the command but adds a detail not found in the earlier command to Adam—"nor shall you touch it, lest you die." Whether this was a misunderstanding or an added safeguard, the effect is the same: the boundary becomes heavier, and the serpent's challenge sharper.

The serpent denies the consequence. "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." The temptation is not simply about disobedience—it is about autonomy. The fruit becomes a symbol of insight, of stepping beyond creaturely limits. The woman sees that the tree is "good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise." She eats, and then gives to her husband "who was with her, and he ate."

This sequence has been the subject of extensive interpretation, often to the detriment of Eve's reputation. But the literal text does not present her as deceiving Adam. She shares the fruit; he eats without protest or resistance. The blame, however, is assigned differently as the story unfolds.

When God confronts the man, Adam deflects: “The woman whom You gave to be with me—she gave me of the tree, and I ate.” The woman, in turn, blames the serpent: “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” Each passes responsibility downward. But the judgment is measured separately.

The serpent is cursed first, condemned to crawl and to eat dust, and placed in perpetual hostility with the woman’s offspring—a detail later interpreted messianically in Christian tradition. The woman is sentenced to pain in childbirth and a complicated dynamic with her husband: “Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” The man is cursed through the ground itself: labor, sweat, and eventual death. “For dust you are, and to dust you shall return.”

What is absent from this account is any mention of inherited guilt. The consequences are immediate and bodily—pain, toil, and expulsion—not theological abstraction. The couple is clothed in garments of skin and driven from the garden, lest they also eat from the tree of life and become immortal. A cherubim with a flaming sword guards the way back.

Thus, in the Genesis account, the fall is framed as a breach of command, initiated through dialogue, shaded with desire, and concluded in exile. The serpent tempts, Eve reaches, Adam follows. Responsibility is shared, but the literary center rests with the woman and the speaking beast. It is a story not of evil unleashed, but of boundaries crossed—and the human cost of seeing too much.

In the New Testament, the story of the fall in Genesis is not retold in narrative form, but it is interpreted with immense theological consequence. What was in the Hebrew Bible a tragic but localized episode becomes in Christian thought a cosmic rupture—one that taints not only Adam and Eve but all of humanity. Central to this shift is the doctrine of original sin, a concept that does not appear explicitly in Genesis but is drawn primarily from the letters of the Apostle Paul, particularly in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15.

Paul’s treatment of Adam transforms the early human figure from a historical ancestor into a theological archetype. In Romans 5:12, Paul writes, “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death came to all people, because all sinned.” Here, Adam is no longer just the first to disobey—he is the conduit through which sin and death became universal. His act of transgression is understood as the origin of a fallen state inherited by every human being thereafter.

This idea of inherited sin—passed from Adam to all his descendants—is foundational to much of Christian soteriology. The New Testament portrays Adam not only as the one who sinned, but as the gatekeeper of the fall. Through him, death reigns. The very condition of being human is thus marked by estrangement from God, a spiritual inheritance that only the grace of Christ can repair.

In contrast to the Genesis account, which divides responsibility between man, woman, and serpent, the New Testament narrative centralizes blame. Eve is rarely mentioned in theological discourse about the fall. In fact, 1 Corinthians 15:22 states: “For as in Adam all

die, so in Christ all will be made alive." The parallel is sharp—Adam is the bringer of death; Christ, the bringer of life. The structure is not of mutual disobedience but of contrasting federal heads: one through whom condemnation comes, and the other through whom redemption is offered.

This framing repositions Adam as more than a participant—he is the representative of all mankind. His sin is not isolated; it is imputed. Later Christian theologians, particularly Augustine, would formalize this concept into the doctrine of original sin: the idea that every human being is born with a sinful nature inherited from Adam, a moral and spiritual corruption requiring divine intervention for reconciliation.

The New Testament also reinterprets the consequences of the fall. Genesis speaks of pain, labor, and death. The New Testament retains death but shifts its focus to spiritual separation from God and the need for a savior. The expulsion from Eden becomes symbolic of humanity's exile from divine intimacy. Restoration is no longer a return to a garden, but a reconciliation made possible only through the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.

In this theology, the fall is not just an event—it is a condition. The serpent fades into the background; Eve becomes a brief reference. Adam stands at the center as the gate through which sin and death entered the world. And Christ stands opposite, as the second Adam, through whom the gates of life are reopened. The story that began with a tree in Eden ends at another tree on Calvary, with Adam's failure corrected not through law or effort, but through grace.

Thus, while Genesis recounts a shared act of disobedience, the New Testament reshapes it into a foundational truth: that humanity is fallen not because we all sin individually, but because we inherit the guilt of the first man. Adam becomes more than a name—he becomes the source of our need for salvation.

The Qur'anic account of humanity's fall stands apart from both the Genesis narrative and its New Testament reinterpretation by refusing to assign unilateral blame, avoiding any doctrine of inherited guilt, and placing the focus not on human corruption but on divine mercy and moral responsibility. The story is retold across several surahs, including Surah 2 (Al-Baqarah), Surah 7 (Al-A'raf), Surah 20 (Ta-Ha), and others. Each version reinforces key differences in emphasis, tone, and theological intent. At its core, the Qur'anic version of the fall is a story not of condemnation, but of error, realization, and return.

In the Qur'an, both Adam and his wife (unnamed in the text, though later Islamic tradition identifies her as Hawwa, or Eve) are approached by Satan. There is no serpent in the garden. The deceiver is Iblis—an entity created from fire, who was cast out for refusing to bow to Adam. His rebellion against God is rooted in pride, and his mission henceforth is to mislead humanity. In Surah 7:20–22, Iblis whispers to both Adam and his wife, enticing them with promises of immortality and a kingdom that never decays. "He swore to them, 'Indeed, I am to you among the sincere advisors.' So he made them fall through deception."

Unlike Genesis, where Eve is the first to be tempted and Adam follows, the Qur'an describes them acting together. There is no narrative of blame directed more at the woman. Their error is mutual. Their awareness is simultaneous. And their response is immediate: they feel shame, seek forgiveness, and are forgiven.

Surah 2:37 affirms this: "Then Adam received words from his Lord, and He turned toward him. Indeed, He is the Accepting of Repentance, the Merciful." There is no curse placed on humanity, no transmission of guilt, and no theological fall from grace. The punishment is expulsion from the garden, but this is portrayed as part of a divine plan, not a mark of damnation. Earth becomes the new arena of trial, where guidance will be sent and human beings will be judged by their own deeds.

Most notably, the Qur'an rejects any notion of original sin. Each soul is born pure, unburdened by the sins of its predecessors. In Surah 6:164, the principle is stated clearly: "No bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another." Adam's mistake is his own, and once repented, it is forgiven. This breaks entirely with the Pauline idea of inherited guilt and collective fallenness. In Islam, sin is not a condition transmitted through generations, but a choice made by individuals, judged in isolation.

Satan's role also differs. He is not a rebellious angel but a jinn, a separate creation. He is not a permanent rival to God, but a deceiver permitted for a time to test human resolve. His influence is limited to suggestion; he cannot compel. His whispers are heard, but not irresistible. The fall is not a triumph of evil, but a reminder of human frailty and divine compassion.

Thus, the Qur'an retells the fall not as a theological catastrophe, but as the first moment of human learning. Adam and his wife disobey, recognize their fault, ask for forgiveness, and receive it. They are not punished with a legacy of sin, but entrusted with life on earth. They fall, not into a cursed existence, but into a world where guidance will meet them, and their return to God remains open.

The literal divergences are clear: no serpent, no woman blamed first, no inherited guilt, and no fall that alters human nature. Instead, the story emphasizes accountability, repentance, and mercy—three themes that will shape the Qur'anic view of humanity throughout the rest of its verses. Where Genesis speaks of exile and the New Testament of atonement, the Qur'an speaks of a trial, a trust, and a return.

The literal consequences of humanity's first disobedience diverge sharply among the Hebrew Bible, the Christian New Testament, and the Qur'an, each mapping a distinct path from sin to suffering—and offering, or withholding, redemption through different mechanisms. These divergences are not subtle. They are embedded in the language, the structure, and the immediate aftermath of the fall narratives. What one text frames as punishment, another spiritualizes. What one condemns as permanent loss, another treats as a recoverable misstep. The literal consequences are not only theological—they shape the human experience itself.

In the Hebrew Bible, the immediate consequences of sin in Genesis are physical, relational, and agricultural. The woman is told, "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children." The man is told, "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life." There is no mention of spiritual separation from God, no theological burden passed to descendants. Instead, the fall introduces suffering into the human condition—pain in childbirth, frustration in labor, and mortality itself: "For dust you are, and to dust you shall return." The relationship between God and humanity is altered, not broken. There is no promise of redemption in the Genesis text itself. The way back to Eden is closed off by a flaming sword, guarded, not reopened. The consequence is exile, not atonement.

In the Christian New Testament, the fall's consequences are expanded and deepened. The language of curse and toil remains, but the event is interpreted as a spiritual catastrophe. Sin, through Adam, is universalized; death is no longer just physical but eternal. Paul's epistles, particularly in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15, lay out the chain: sin enters through one man, and with it, death for all. The human condition is no longer simply laborious—it is lost. Humanity stands condemned by default, not for individual acts alone, but for a shared guilt inherited from the first man. This introduces the need for redemption that cannot be achieved by human effort or ritual. The solution is Christ—whose death is presented not as an isolated sacrifice but as a cosmic correction. As sin entered through Adam, grace flows through Christ. Redemption is made possible not through returning to the garden, but through the cross. The literal consequence of sin is death, and the literal answer is resurrection.

The Qur'an diverges entirely from this framework. There is no inherited guilt, and therefore no theological need for a redemptive sacrifice. The consequences of the fall are immediate and personal: expulsion from the garden and the beginning of life on earth. But the Qur'an offers a resolution within the same narrative. Adam and his wife repent. God forgives. The consequence is not condemnation but relocation. In Surah 2:38, God declares: "Go down from it, all of you. Then when guidance comes to you from Me, whoever follows My guidance—there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve." The consequence is not suffering without recourse, but a test with guidance. Suffering exists, but not as punishment—it is a condition of earthly life, a space where free will must be exercised. Redemption is available through repentance, prayer, and righteous deeds. No mediator is required. The path is direct.

The contrasts are sharp. Genesis presents a world where human disobedience incurs physical hardship and mortality, but stops short of defining humanity as inherently corrupt. The New Testament escalates the narrative: sin becomes a stain passed from Adam to all, redeemable only through divine intervention in the form of Christ. The Qur'an, on the other hand, deescalates the drama: sin is an error, acknowledged, forgiven, and followed by guidance. There is consequence, but not condemnation; suffering, but not inherited curse; the need for repentance, but not a savior.

In literal terms, then, the consequences for sin across the three scriptures shape three different human narratives. One of burden and exile. One of fall and redemption. One of test and

return. And from these divergences arise three civilizations with three profoundly distinct understandings of what it means to fall—and what it means to be saved.

When examined without commentary or theological gloss, the literal language of each scripture on the fall of man, the nature of guilt, and the possibility of mercy reveals foundational differences in message and meaning. These are not interpretive conclusions—they are the direct words of the texts themselves, presented in translation but preserving the distinct tone and structure of their source material. Each scripture speaks in its own voice, and what it chooses to emphasize—blame, burden, or forgiveness—reflects a deeper vision of humanity's relationship with the divine.

In the Hebrew Bible, the fall narrative is contained in Genesis 3. The words focus on actions, questions, and consequences. Eve says: "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." Adam says: "The woman whom You gave to be with me—she gave me of the tree, and I ate." God does not accuse them of corrupting all creation. Instead, He declares: "Cursed is the ground for your sake," and to the woman, "In pain you shall bring forth children." Death is introduced not as punishment from heaven but as the natural end of a now-altered world: "For dust you are, and to dust you shall return." There is no direct use of the word "guilt." Mercy, though implicit in the act of clothing Adam and Eve with garments of skin, is not explicitly offered. The gate to Eden is closed. No promise of future redemption is spoken. The text ends with expulsion and guarding of the tree of life.

In the Christian New Testament, the emphasis shifts dramatically. Romans 5:12 states: "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Paul continues in verse 18: "Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." Guilt is universalized—"all have sinned." The language is judicial: offense, judgment, condemnation, justification. Mercy is framed not as individual forgiveness but as a systemic reversal of sin's consequences, accomplished by Christ. It is not just that Adam sinned—it is that all were somehow in Adam when he fell, and all need Christ's obedience to be made right. This formulation introduces a chain of cause and solution that is literal in its words but theological in its reach. The concept of guilt is singular and inherited; mercy is collective and redemptive.

In the Qur'an, the text is equally direct but markedly different in tone and content. Surah 7:22 recounts: "So he [Satan] made them fall through deception. And when they tasted of the tree, their private parts became apparent to them, and they began to fasten together leaves of Paradise over themselves." Then in verse 23: "They said, 'Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers.'" The word for guilt is not present. The term used is *ẓalamnā anfusanā*—"we have wronged ourselves." The sin is acknowledged by both, without accusation or deflection. In Surah 2:37: "Then Adam received words from his Lord, and He accepted his repentance. Indeed, He is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful." The mercy is immediate,

unmediated, and unburdened by inheritance. No mention is made of humanity sharing Adam's fault. The emphasis is on recognition, repentance, and divine forgiveness.

Thus, word for word, each scripture sets forth a different script. The Hebrew Bible speaks of consequence without doctrinal guilt and closes the garden gate without offering theological closure. The New Testament speaks of a global inheritance of guilt through one man, requiring mercy through another. The Qur'an speaks of shared human error, direct repentance, and divine mercy granted at once.

Each voice is literal. Each is internally coherent. But together, they form not a single narrative, but three divergent accounts of how humanity fell, what it means to be guilty, and how—if at all—God brings mercy in return.

Abraham and the Sacrificial Son

The story of Abraham's near-sacrifice of his son stands among the most powerful and unsettling episodes in the Hebrew Bible. It is a moment that combines obedience, faith, and fear—where divine command collides with paternal love. In Genesis 22, the narrative is delivered with spare intensity, leaving readers suspended between horror and reverence. And at its heart lies a critical textual feature: the son to be sacrificed is explicitly named—Isaac.

The chapter opens with divine initiative. "And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am." The word "tempt," better translated as "test," frames the narrative not as punishment or instruction, but as a trial of loyalty. God's command is unambiguous: "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

This triple designation—"thy son, thine only son, Isaac"—removes all ambiguity. The sacrifice is not metaphor, nor misdirection. It is directed at Isaac, the child born from Sarah after years of barrenness, the son of the covenant, the bearer of the promised lineage. Despite Abraham having another son, Ishmael, the text refers to Isaac as the only son in this context, emphasizing his unique place in the divine promise.

Abraham obeys without protest. There is no recorded dialogue of resistance or confusion, no plea for clarification. He rises early, splits wood, and sets out with Isaac. The narrative slows as they approach the mountain. Abraham tells the servants, "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you," a phrase that echoes either faith in return or concealment of intent. As they ascend, Isaac notices the absence of a sacrificial animal: "Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham replies with enduring ambiguity: "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering, my son."

At the peak, the preparations are stark. Abraham builds an altar, arranges the wood, binds Isaac, and lays him upon the altar. The text offers no insight into Isaac's emotions, nor whether he resisted. As Abraham reaches for the knife, an angel of the Lord intervenes: "Lay

not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God." A ram is seen caught in a thicket, and it is sacrificed in Isaac's place.

The episode closes with divine reaffirmation. God declares that because Abraham did not withhold his son, his only son, his descendants will be as the stars of heaven and the sand of the seashore. This repetition again names Isaac as the intended sacrifice and binds the act to covenantal reward.

In the literal reading of Genesis, there is no doubt. Isaac is the chosen son, the one to be offered. The test is not of Abraham's understanding, but of his obedience to an unthinkable demand. The scene is one of terrifying clarity, where the act of near-sacrifice seals Abraham's place as the archetype of faith. No reinterpretation is suggested. No confusion exists over the son's identity. The knife is raised above Isaac—and only stopped by heaven.

Within the Christian tradition, the Genesis account of Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac becomes more than a story of faith—it becomes a prefiguration, a prophetic type that points forward to the central event of Christian belief: the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. This reading is not based on a reinterpretation of the text, but on a theological lens through which the narrative is understood as foreshadowing. Isaac is not merely a historical son on an altar; he becomes a symbolic Christ figure—innocent, obedient, and bound for sacrifice.

The New Testament never directly quotes Genesis 22 in full, but its language, structure, and themes echo repeatedly in Christian exegesis. In Romans 8:32, Paul writes: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" The phrasing deliberately mirrors God's statement to Abraham in Genesis 22: "Because you have not withheld your son, your only son." In this typology, Abraham becomes a reflection of God the Father, Isaac becomes the Son, and the binding on Mount Moriah becomes a precursor to Calvary.

In Hebrews 11:17–19, the connection is made more explicit: "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac… accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." This passage introduces the idea of resurrection into the Isaac narrative—a theme not present in the Genesis text itself. The letter to the Hebrews reads the event as a symbolic death and restoration, a shadow of Christ's literal death and resurrection. Isaac is seen as returned from death figuratively; Christ will be raised in truth.

Christian typology often lingers on the small, literal details of Genesis 22 to draw deeper parallels. Isaac carries the wood on his back up the mountain—just as Jesus carries the cross. Abraham journeys for three days before reaching the site—echoing the three days between Christ's death and resurrection. The concept of substitution also resonates: Isaac is spared, and a ram is sacrificed in his place. For Christians, this prefigures Jesus as the ultimate substitutionary offering—one who is not spared, so that others might be.

What remains unique in the Christian reading is that Isaac's near-death is not merely a test of faith, but a symbolic pointer to divine intention. The test reveals not just Abraham's loyalty,

but God's plan to one day give up His own Son without substitution. Where the knife stops above Isaac, it does not stop above Jesus. The story, in Christian thought, was always meant to prepare hearts to understand the greater sacrifice to come.

Thus, while Genesis presents a literal moment of tested obedience, Christianity views it as an embedded prophecy. Isaac is not re-identified—he remains the son on the altar—but the meaning of his near-death is lifted beyond the text's original frame. The ram in the thicket becomes a signpost. The mountain becomes a stage for foreshadowing. And Abraham, the father of many nations, becomes—through typology—the mirror of the heavenly Father who does not withhold His Son, but offers Him up for the redemption of the world.

In the Qur'an, the story of Abraham's intended sacrifice of his son diverges significantly in both structure and emphasis from the Genesis account. The son is not named, the event is framed around obedience rather than trial, and the narrative culminates not in theological foreshadowing, but in a reaffirmation of submission to God's will. The emphasis is not on testing Abraham's limits, nor on inheritance of guilt or salvation, but on the moral triumph of faith in the face of divine command. Within this framework, later Islamic tradition overwhelmingly identifies the intended son as Ishmael—not Isaac.

The central passage appears in Surah 37:99–113. It begins with Abraham's prayer for righteous offspring, followed by the birth of a forbearing son. "And We gave him good tidings of a forbearing boy. And when he reached the age of striving with him, he said, 'O my son, indeed I have seen in a dream that I [must] sacrifice you, so see what you think.' He said, 'O my father, do as you are commanded. You will find me, if Allah wills, of the steadfast.'" (37:101–102)

Unlike Genesis, where the command comes directly from God to Abraham, the Qur'an presents it through a dream. The son is not a passive figure but an active participant. His response is not one of confusion or resistance but of calm submission. The interaction is mutual, intimate, and aligned. Both father and son are praised for their willingness to comply with the divine will, without hesitation.

The identity of the son is notably omitted from the passage. The Qur'an simply refers to him as a *ḥalīm*—a patient or forbearing boy. This omission has led to differing interpretations over time, but the overwhelming consensus in Islamic commentary and tradition, especially in early and classical sources, is that the son was Ishmael. This view is supported by the textual order of the surrounding verses. After the episode concludes with divine praise —"Indeed, this was the clear trial, and We ransomed him with a great sacrifice" (37:106–107)—the next verse introduces Isaac: "And We gave him good tidings of Isaac, a prophet from among the righteous." (37:112)

This sequencing suggests that Isaac's birth is either subsequent or independent of the sacrificial episode, reinforcing the interpretation that the boy involved was Ishmael. Islamic scholars further argue that the designation of Ishmael as the son who reached the age of "striving" matches the chronology of his early life with Abraham, especially as he was raised in Mecca, distant from Sarah and Isaac.

Most importantly, the Qur'anic telling highlights the principle of *Islam*—submission. Abraham sees, believes, and acts. His son consents. When the moment comes and Abraham lays his son down, God intervenes: "You have fulfilled the vision." No angel calls out. No replacement animal is found by chance. Instead, God provides a ransom—a substitution that affirms Abraham's devotion and spares the boy.

There is no typological reading here. The son is not a foreshadow of another savior. The sacrifice is not deferred to a future crucifixion. It is complete in its moment: a test of faith, obedience, and divine mercy. The consequence is reward, not prophecy. Abraham is praised. The son is praised. And the narrative closes with reaffirmation of divine favor.

Thus, in the Qur'an, the sacrifice is not about inheritance or theology—it is about the human heart's capacity to submit, even to the most painful command. By leaving the son unnamed, the Qur'an universalizes the test. By emphasizing obedience over outcome, it redefines what matters. And through Ishmael, as later Islamic tradition affirms, it centers a lineage that will culminate not in a cross, but in the final prophet—Muhammad, descendant of the boy once willing to lay his life down without question.

To compare the account of Abraham's intended sacrifice across scriptures purely on the level of text—without reference to later commentary or inherited tradition—requires a strict focus on what the verses themselves state. When examined in this way, the divergence becomes not only theological but also linguistic and narrative. While Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions have each elaborated their interpretations through centuries of exegesis, the literal wording of the scriptures tells a more restrained and, at times, ambiguous story.

In Genesis 22, the Hebrew Bible presents a complete narrative with unmistakable clarity. The command is direct: "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love…" The name "Isaac" is repeated at both the beginning and end of the episode. The narrative is rich with detail—location, dialogue, physical actions—and the reader is told precisely what is happening, from divine instruction to Abraham's near-execution of the command. The ram appears just in time, and the son's identity is never in question. The literal reading leaves no ambiguity: the son is Isaac, and the test is of Abraham's readiness to give up the child of promise.

In the Qur'an's version, located primarily in Surah 37:99–113, the literal reading yields a different structure. A son is born after a prayer: "So We gave him good tidings of a forbearing boy." No name is provided. The son reaches maturity and joins his father in daily life. Then comes a dream—not a direct verbal command—and Abraham consults his son before acting: "O my son, I have seen in a dream that I must sacrifice you. So what do you think?" The son replies with complete submission. The narrative emphasizes obedience and divine mercy: "You have fulfilled the vision." Only after this sequence concludes do we find, in a separate verse, "And We gave him good tidings of Isaac, a prophet from among the righteous." This appears to introduce Isaac as a new figure, not to identify him retroactively as the boy in question.

Literally, the Qur'anic passage avoids naming the son involved in the sacrifice. There is no equivalent phrase to "your only son Isaac." The structure of the passage suggests that the sacrificed son is the "forbearing boy" of verse 101, while Isaac is announced in verse 112. Any conclusion that the boy is Isaac must be inferred, not drawn from the wording itself. The literal reading therefore supports at least the possibility—if not the likelihood—that a different son is intended.

The Christian New Testament, for its part, does not retell the sacrifice episode but uses it as a theological template. In Hebrews 11:17–19, Abraham "offered up Isaac" and "considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which figuratively speaking, he did receive him back." Again, Isaac is named, and no ambiguity is permitted. The New Testament assumes the Genesis identification and builds typology upon it. But it adds ideas—such as resurrection—that are absent from the Hebrew text. While the name is literal, the meaning is theological.

Thus, a strict comparison of the verses alone—Genesis 22 and Surah 37—reveals that the Hebrew Bible names Isaac clearly, while the Qur'an does not name the son at all within the sacrifice scene. The Christian New Testament affirms Isaac's identity but does so through a theological interpretation rather than new narrative. In all cases, the literal text carries implications distinct from the weight of religious tradition. Genesis asserts. The Qur'an withholds. The New Testament reflects.

Each scripture allows the story to function within its larger textual world, but when read without inherited commentary, the lines diverge. The Hebrew Bible speaks plainly and decisively. The Qur'an speaks purposefully but without identification. The Christian scriptures affirm what Genesis already names. In this purely textual space, stripped of doctrine and centuries of commentary, the divergence of names and silences becomes a literal difference—deliberate, unblended, and clear.

The presence of ambiguity in the Qur'anic version of the sacrifice, and the motif of substitution across all three scriptures, opens a field of interpretive consequence that is as much literary as it is theological. Where Genesis is explicit and the New Testament draws typology from clarity, the Qur'an introduces purposeful silence—a withholding of the son's name—that transforms the nature of the story. Substitution, present in all accounts in one form or another, becomes not just a resolution but a lens through which each tradition views the meaning of sacrifice, obedience, and divine justice.

In the Hebrew Bible, the substitution is literal and immediate. Isaac is bound on the altar, the knife raised above him, and then a ram appears, caught in a thicket. The text describes the moment with concrete action. "And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns." The ram takes Isaac's place. The substitution affirms God's mercy, acknowledges Abraham's faith, and reinforces the covenant without violating the moral crisis of child sacrifice. The clarity of identity—Isaac, the covenantal son—intensifies the emotional and theological stakes. The implications are sharp: God demands everything, then relents; He tests by threatening the promise and then secures it with grace.

In Christian thought, that substitution becomes a symbol. The ram foreshadows Christ. The knife that did not fall upon Isaac eventually falls upon Jesus. In this reading, substitution is elevated from act to prophecy. God spares Isaac but not His own Son. The implication is that Abraham's ordeal prefigures divine self-sacrifice—God does what He did not ultimately require from Abraham. This transforms the narrative from a lesson in obedience into a cornerstone of atonement theology. The substitute is not an animal—it is a human life offered willingly, once and for all.

In the Qur'an, the substitution occurs in verse 107 of Surah 37: "And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice." The act is described but not dramatized. No animal is seen, no scene of discovery unfolds. Yet the idea of substitution is clearly stated. The boy, unnamed but fully cooperative, is not sacrificed. Instead, he is ransomed—an act that affirms divine mercy and elevates both father and son as models of submission. The ambiguity of the son's identity enhances, rather than weakens, the moral gravity of the narrative. Without a named son, the story becomes universalized. The message is not limited to a specific lineage; it becomes about the ideal response to divine command. Abraham is not tested through the uniqueness of the child, but through the weight of the command itself.

This ambiguity allows the Qur'anic story to remain rooted in obedience rather than inheritance. The focus is not on which son is offered, but that both father and son embody *Islam*—submission to God's will. The identity of the substitute is also not detailed. The moral lesson overrides the biographical detail. The implication is theological minimalism: the point is surrender, not spectacle.

Taken together, these literal differences produce distinct implications. In Genesis, substitution preserves the covenant child and limits the divine demand. In Christianity, the absence of substitution in the ultimate sacrifice (Jesus) underscores the cost of redemption. In the Qur'an, substitution validates obedience and illustrates mercy without naming or elevating one son over the other—at least in the verses themselves.

The ambiguity, far from weakening the narrative, offers a flexibility that allows for broad moral teaching. It shields the event from being overly ethnicized or genealogically bound. The Qur'anic son is every obedient child; Abraham becomes the prototype of the faithful servant. The substitution affirms divine compassion, not covenantal exclusivity.

Thus, the literal choices—whether of clarity or ambiguity, of specific substitution or abstract mercy—reshape the narrative's meaning in each text. The knife never falls, but in each scripture, what is withheld tells us as much as what is given. And in that withheld moment, the story becomes not only about what happened, but about what each community believes God ultimately asks of us—and what He is willing to give in return.

Noah and the Deluge

The Genesis account of the flood is a narrative of catastrophic judgment followed by covenantal grace. Found across chapters 6 through 9, it describes a global deluge unleashed in response to human wickedness, sparing only Noah—"a righteous man, blameless in his generation"—his family, and a representative pair of each animal species. The flood is presented not as a natural event, but as a divinely orchestrated erasure of corrupted creation. The text moves from moral corruption to watery destruction, then to renewal and promise.

Genesis 6:5 sets the tone with blunt finality: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth… and it grieved Him to His heart." In response, God declares, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth." Noah, however, "found grace in the eyes of the Lord." The ark is introduced not as a means of escape, but as an instrument of salvation. God provides detailed instructions—its dimensions, materials, and purpose—transforming Noah from farmer to shipbuilder at divine command.

The literal description of the flood is expansive and all-encompassing. "All the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened." Rain falls for forty days and nights, and the waters prevail for 150 days. The language is absolute: "All flesh died… every man. All in whose nostrils was the breath of life." Mountains are submerged. The reset is total.

After the waters subside and the ark rests upon Ararat, Noah emerges into a world washed clean of civilization. His first act is to build an altar and offer burnt offerings. God's response is a pivotal turn: "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake." The flood becomes not only an act of destruction but a prelude to divine mercy. What follows is the establishment of a covenant, sealed not by law but by promise. God speaks to Noah and his sons: "I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you." The terms are unilateral—God binds Himself never again to destroy all life with a flood.

The symbol of this covenant is the rainbow. "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth." The bow—once a weapon of war—now hangs suspended, inverted, disarmed. It is not merely a visual sign but a theological statement: divine wrath has a limit. The image anchors the flood narrative not in apocalyptic terror, but in restoration.

The Genesis flood story, therefore, presents a structured arc: human evil, divine regret, annihilation, survival, and covenant. It is a total reset of the created order, yet ends with a promise that such a reset will never occur again. The literal language emphasizes scale, loss, and renewal. Noah is not only a survivor but a new Adam, standing at the threshold of a reformed world under the sign of divine restraint. The rainbow remains not as decoration, but as testimony—a visible assurance that while humanity may fail again, divine destruction will not follow.

In the New Testament, the figure of Noah is less a vessel builder than a moral exemplar, remembered not for the engineering of the ark but for the enduring quality of his faith. The flood is not retold in narrative form, as it is in Genesis, but it is recalled in selective fragments, reinterpreted to serve broader theological points. Chief among these is the idea of

Noah as a “preacher of righteousness,” a designation that reframes the flood not only as judgment but also as a missed opportunity for repentance.

This portrayal comes most clearly in 2 Peter 2:5, where the author writes: “If He did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly…” The phrase “preacher of righteousness” is unique to the New Testament and not found in Genesis. It implies that Noah’s role was not only to obey but also to warn. He is cast as a witness against his generation, speaking truth amid corruption, even if no one listened. His righteousness becomes prophetic.

In Hebrews 11:7, Noah is placed within the great lineage of faith: “By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, took heed and constructed an ark for the saving of his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.” Here, his building of the ark is itself an act of belief—obedience in advance of judgment. The verse does not dwell on destruction, but on the salvific nature of Noah’s trust. He becomes not just a survivor, but a template for Christian faith: responding to God’s word without visible evidence, trusting in what is promised, and preparing for what is unseen.

The New Testament also draws typological meaning from the flood. In 1 Peter 3:20–21, the waters of the flood are explicitly linked to baptism: “In the days of Noah… eight souls were saved through water. This is a symbol of baptism, which now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God.” The flood is recast not only as judgment but as purification. Just as Noah’s ark carried him through the waters of destruction into new life, baptism becomes the Christian’s passage through death into resurrection. Water, once an agent of divine wrath, is now a symbol of spiritual renewal.

Throughout the New Testament, Noah serves a dual purpose: he is both an emblem of divine patience and a reminder of coming judgment. In Matthew 24:37–39, Jesus uses Noah’s generation to describe the moral state of the world before the second coming: “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.” People were eating, drinking, marrying—unaware until the flood came. The point is not the flood itself, but the blindness of those who ignored the warning.

Thus, in the New Testament, the literal figure of Noah from Genesis is retained, but reinterpreted. He is a herald, not a silent laborer; a preacher, not just a builder. The flood is remembered not only for its devastation but for the moral message ignored. Noah's righteousness is emphasized more than the ark’s measurements. And his life, spared in an age of ruin, becomes a mirror held up to the believer—not to fear water, but to heed the word of God before the waters come again.

The Qur’anic account of Noah and the flood presents a narrative both familiar and deeply distinct from the Genesis telling. The structural elements remain: a prophet, a corrupt people, divine warning, an ark, a flood, and survival. Yet the Qur’an reshapes the story’s tone and focus. Where Genesis emphasizes a global judgment and covenantal renewal, the Qur’an centers on personal rejection, emotional tragedy, and moral responsibility. Most strikingly,

the Qur’an introduces characters and scenes absent from Genesis—most notably, a rebellious son who drowns and a nation that scorns Noah’s long preaching.

The core passages appear in Surah 11 (Hūd), Surah 23 (Al-Mu’minūn), and Surah 71 (Nūḥ). The Qur’an portrays Noah as a prophet with a clear mission: “Indeed, We sent Noah to his people, [saying], ‘Warn your people before there comes to them a painful punishment.’” (71:1) Noah's preaching lasts for centuries—“He remained among them a thousand years minus fifty” (29:14)—but the response is defiance, mockery, and disbelief. The people dismiss him as a mere man, accuse him of lying, and grow increasingly aggressive in their rejection.

Unlike Genesis, which describes God as grieved and disappointed, the Qur’an presents Noah as emotionally worn and spiritually burdened. He pleads repeatedly for their salvation. “My Lord, indeed I invited my people night and day… and I called them openly… then I announced to them and [also] confided to them secretly.” (71:5–9) But his calls go unanswered, and the people only increase in arrogance. Ultimately, Noah appeals to God, declaring that no more converts will come. It is at this point—not simply because of general wickedness—that the flood is decreed.

The Qur’an makes clear that salvation is not inherited. One must believe. This point is most painfully illustrated in Surah 11:42–43, where Noah calls to his son as the ark rises: “O my son, come aboard with us and be not with the disbelievers.” His son replies, “I will take refuge on a mountain to protect me from the water.” Noah warns him that there is no protector from God’s decree, and the waves separate them. The son is drowned. This episode, absent from the Bible, introduces a sharp tension between bloodline and belief. Noah—a prophet favored by God—cannot save his own son. The lesson is clear: salvation is earned by faith, not guaranteed by lineage.

Later in the same surah, Noah pleads with God for his son, saying, “My Lord, indeed my son is of my family.” God responds, “O Noah, indeed he is not of your family; indeed, he is [one whose] work was other than righteous.” (11:45–46) This correction reframes family not as biological connection but as spiritual kinship. The implication is theological and direct: God’s mercy is just, and no one is shielded by ancestry alone.

Moreover, the Qur’an does not describe animals boarding in pairs nor global destruction in detail. The flood is comprehensive for those denied entry to the ark, but the emphasis is on human disobedience rather than cosmic erasure. There is no rainbow, no explicit covenant like that in Genesis. The ark comes to rest on “Al-Jūdiyy” (11:44), and the story concludes not with celebratory renewal, but with Noah’s prayer, God’s guidance, and a warning to future generations.

In the Qur’anic flood narrative, fewer are saved, and each soul bears its own weight. The moral clarity is sharp: obedience protects, disbelief destroys, even within the household of a prophet. The flood is a judgment, yes—but it is also a vindication of truth, a sorrowful lesson in the cost of rejection, and a reminder that divine justice is individual, unmediated by tribe or

blood. Noah weeps, his son drowns, and the ark floats on. The survivors are not many, but they are the believers—and belief, in the Qur'anic telling, is the only vessel that truly saves.

Across the scriptures of Genesis, the New Testament, and the Qur'an, the ark built by Noah serves as a central instrument of survival—but its role shifts dramatically depending on the text. In Genesis, it is a literal structure described in precise physical terms. In the New Testament, it becomes a symbolic vessel of faith and salvation. In the Qur'an, the ark is a functional tool of divine mercy, but stripped of technical detail, allowing it to operate more as a symbol of obedience and protection than as an engineered ship. These contrasts reflect not only different literary aims, but different theological priorities.

In Genesis, the ark is described with meticulous specifications. "Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you shall make it: the length of the ark shall be 300 cubits, its width 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits." (Genesis 6:14–15) These are not symbolic numbers—they are engineering dimensions. The ark is described with decks, compartments, and a single window. The function is clear: to preserve human and animal life from a literal flood that will cover the earth. The text emphasizes obedience through construction. Noah does all "just as God commanded him." The ark, in Genesis, is a structure of survival, with physical weight and architectural reality.

In the New Testament, this same ark is reinterpreted. Its shape and design are irrelevant to the message. In 1 Peter 3:20–21, it becomes a symbol of salvation through obedience and faith. "In the days of Noah… eight souls were saved through water. This is a symbol of baptism, which now saves you also." The ark, in this reading, is not just a ship but a prophetic frame. It anticipates the church, the cross, and the waters of baptism. The literal construction becomes a spiritual metaphor. The flood becomes a cleansing, not just a judgment. Noah's entry into the ark becomes a figure of entry into divine grace. The New Testament thus discards the structural for the symbolic, not rejecting the Genesis account but reconfiguring it for its Christological message.

In the Qur'an, the ark is described with urgency, but not blueprints. God says, "Construct the ship under Our observation and Our inspiration and do not address Me concerning those who have wronged; indeed, they are [to be] drowned." (Surah 11:37) The emphasis is not on measurement but on divine guidance. Noah is told to build, and he builds. As he constructs the ark, people mock him. The act of building becomes a visible act of trust in unseen danger, just as in Genesis and Hebrews. But the Qur'an omits material details. The ark sails "in the name of God, its course and its anchorage," (11:41) suggesting not navigation by stars or rudder, but by trust in divine will.

When the flood comes, the ark floats "through waves like mountains." The setting is dramatic and overwhelming, but still devoid of technical features. The structure of the ark is not the focus—the builder's obedience is. The ark rests on Mount Jūdiyy, a different mountain from Genesis's Ararat, and no animal inventory or blueprint is supplied. The vessel is a frame for faith, not for history. The Qur'an treats the ark not as a wonder of engineering but as a sign of divine rescue, free from scientific inquiry or human mastery.

Thus, the ark across scriptures moves from physical reality to theological metaphor. In Genesis, it is a literal vessel with survival capacity. In the New Testament, it is a symbol of baptism and salvation through faith. In the Qur'an, it becomes a manifestation of divine protection, summoned by revelation and piloted by trust. Each use reflects the broader themes of the scripture in which it appears—precision and covenant in Genesis, spiritual typology in the New Testament, and obedience and personal accountability in the Qur'an.

Whether seen as structure or symbol, the ark serves one central function in all texts: to carry the obedient through destruction. Its shape may vary, but its message is consistent—the faithful are saved not by might or design, but by responding to the word of God when others will not.

A literal reading of the flood narratives across the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Qur'an reveals significant contrasts in scope, cause, and outcome. While all three texts agree on the central elements of a divinely sent flood, a righteous man, and the survival of a select few, their wording and emphases differ in ways that reflect broader theological and literary frameworks. These divergences are not minor; they represent distinct understandings of divine justice, human failure, and the purpose of survival.

In Genesis, the flood is framed as a global annihilation. "And all flesh died that moved upon the earth… every man: all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died." (Genesis 7:21–22) The scope is total. The mountains are covered, and only Noah, his family, and the animals on the ark survive. The cause is explicitly moral: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth… and it repented the Lord that he had made man." (Genesis 6:5–6) The flood is God's response to unchecked violence and corruption. The outcome is both destruction and renewal. After the waters recede, God establishes a covenant with Noah and all living creatures: never again will He destroy the earth by flood. The sign is a rainbow, an eternal visual promise. The flood is thus a divine reset, paired with a structural commitment to future restraint.

In the New Testament, the literal flood narrative is not retold but remembered as an example. The scope is accepted as global, and the cause is moral blindness. Jesus says in Matthew 24:38–39, "For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking… until the flood came and took them all away." The flood functions as a warning. In 2 Peter 2:5, the author notes that God "did not spare the ancient world," reinforcing the idea of widespread judgment. Yet the outcome is reinterpreted: the flood is not the final act but a precursor. It illustrates God's ability to punish the ungodly while preserving the faithful. The flood's waters are later compared to baptism (1 Peter 3:20–21), transforming the destructive event into a symbol of cleansing and salvation. Thus, the New Testament keeps the scale and severity of Genesis but reorients the outcome toward spiritual meaning.

The Qur'an, by contrast, offers a more individualized account. The scope of the flood is less explicitly global. While the punishment is clearly devastating for Noah's people, the language does not specify total planetary destruction. In Surah 11:40, it is said, "The oven gushed forth, and We said, 'Load upon it of each [creature] two mates, and your family—except those against whom the word has preceded—and [include] whoever has believed.' But none

had believed with him, except a few." This focus on "his people" and "a few" believers narrows the flood to a regional or communal judgment. The cause, likewise, is disobedience —not merely generic evil, but active rejection of a prophet's message. Noah's endless preaching is met with mockery, and God's decree comes only after the refusal to believe is complete.

The outcome in the Qur'an is not covenantal but exemplary. After the flood, Noah prays, God responds, and his people are gone. The story ends with a reminder: "Indeed in that is a sign, but most of them were not to be believers." (Surah 26:121) There is no universal promise not to flood again, no rainbow, no declaration of a new human order. Instead, the emphasis is on God's justice and the consequences of ignoring prophetic warning. The flood becomes a prototype for how other communities will be judged if they reject divine guidance.

In summary, the literal flood in Genesis is global, caused by human violence, and ends with a divine promise of mercy. The New Testament retains the totality and moral cause but shifts the meaning toward spiritual renewal and eschatological warning. The Qur'an presents a flood of localized but decisive scope, caused by rejection of divine revelation, and concludes with a lesson in personal accountability rather than a covenant. Each scripture recounts the same event, yet through divergent frames of scale, purpose, and result—revealing not just what was destroyed, but what each tradition sees as worth preserving.

Moses and Pharaoh

The story of Moses and Pharaoh in the Book of Exodus stands as a defining narrative of liberation, divine power, and covenantal law. It is a sweeping epic that begins in the oppression of Israelite slaves and crescendos through miraculous plagues, dramatic confrontations, and the thunderous giving of the Law at Mount Sinai. This story does not unfold subtly. It is written with intensity, and its literal text drives home three powerful themes: God's supremacy over human power, the resistance of Pharaoh, and the birth of Israel as a covenant people.

The confrontation begins when God commands Moses, through the burning bush, to return to Egypt and demand freedom for the Israelites. Pharaoh refuses. In response, God unleashes a series of escalating plagues—ten in all—each increasing in scope and severity. From turning the Nile into blood to unleashing frogs, lice, boils, locusts, and finally the death of the firstborn, the plagues are not arbitrary afflictions; they are direct assaults on Egyptian gods, nature, and royal authority. The text describes them as signs and wonders, intended to display God's power not only to Pharaoh but to the Israelites and the world.

Central to the drama is the recurring phrase: "But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart." This expression appears in various forms, sometimes as Pharaoh hardening his own heart, other times as God doing it directly. The Hebrew phrasing varies—some suggesting strengthening, others implying weight or stubbornness. This tension raises theological questions about free

will and divine sovereignty, but on a literal level, the hardening functions as a narrative device that prolongs the conflict and magnifies the ultimate deliverance.

Each time Pharaoh refuses, the consequences escalate. The literal repetition in the text—Moses warns, Pharaoh denies, the plague falls—creates a rhythm of divine challenge and human defiance. The final plague, the death of the firstborn, strikes at the heart of Egypt. It is only then that Pharaoh relents, and the Israelites flee under divine protection. But even in retreat, Pharaoh changes his mind and pursues them to the Red Sea, where the waters part for Israel and close upon the Egyptians.

The second half of the Exodus narrative moves from escape to revelation. At Mount Sinai, the people encamp, and the mountain becomes the stage for a direct encounter with God. Thunder, lightning, smoke, and the blast of a trumpet mark the giving of the Law. The Ten Commandments are delivered not as abstract principles, but as the terms of a covenant. "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." The identity of the people is now inseparable from their deliverance and their duty.

This lawgiving marks a critical shift. The Israelites are no longer just former slaves—they are now a nation bound to divine statutes. The literal tablets, inscribed by the finger of God, become the physical and spiritual foundation of the covenant. Sinai is not just the climax of the Exodus; it is the beginning of a legal and moral order that defines Israelite life.

Thus, the Exodus account presents a literal chain: oppression, resistance, miraculous deliverance, and covenantal law. The ten plagues are not merely punishments; they are demonstrations. Pharaoh's hardened heart is not incidental; it is part of a divine orchestration. And the Law at Sinai is not a conclusion, but the establishment of a new world under divine governance. From the brick pits of Egypt to the trembling heights of Sinai, the literal narrative is one of transformation—of a people, of power, and of the covenant that will shape them.

In the New Testament, the figure of Moses is honored as a prophet and lawgiver but ultimately cast within a framework that prepares for and is fulfilled by Jesus Christ. The story of Moses and the Exodus is not retold in full, but it is echoed, reinterpreted, and reoriented to serve the Christian vision of divine revelation. In this re-reading, Moses remains central to the history of Israel, but his role as mediator of the Law is seen as provisional—a necessary but incomplete stage that will be transcended by the coming of the Messiah.

The Gospel of Matthew introduces this theme subtly through narrative structure. Just as Moses came out of Egypt, faced a murderous ruler, and went up a mountain to receive the Law, so too does Jesus, whose early life includes a flight to Egypt, survival of Herod's slaughter, and a Sermon on the Mount where he speaks with authoritative interpretation. Matthew 5:17–18 makes the connection explicit: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." The term "fulfill" here is key—it positions Jesus not in opposition to Moses, but as the one who completes and perfects what Moses began.

Paul's epistles expand on this idea by drawing a contrast between the covenant of Moses and the new covenant in Christ. In 2 Corinthians 3:7–11, Paul refers to the Mosaic covenant as "the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone," which came with glory but fades before the surpassing glory of Christ. The Law, given at Sinai, was real and divine, but it served to reveal sin rather than to redeem. "Now if the ministry that brought death… came with glory… will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious?"

The most developed theological argument comes in the Letter to the Hebrews. Here, Moses is portrayed as a faithful servant in God's house, but Jesus is "a Son over His own house." (Hebrews 3:5–6) The covenant mediated by Moses is called the "old covenant," and its rituals—especially the sacrificial system and priesthood—are described as shadows of a heavenly reality. In Hebrews 8:6, Jesus is said to be the mediator of "a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises." The giving of the Law at Sinai is reinterpreted as an arrangement that could not bring perfection, and so had to be replaced.

Even the miracles associated with Moses, such as the manna from heaven, are reframed. In John 6:32–33, Jesus says, "It was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." The wilderness provision is recast, not denied, but surpassed by the incarnation.

In this Christian echo, Moses stands as a towering but transitional figure. He brings the people out of bondage, but not into ultimate rest. He ascends the mountain, but the Law he brings down is incomplete. His authority is great, but it is a precursor to something greater. Jesus, in Christian theology, is the new Moses—yet more than Moses. He does not merely deliver a law, but embodies it. He does not stop at Sinai, but leads to the cross and resurrection.

Thus, while the Exodus narrative remains foundational, the New Testament reframes its meaning. Moses is honored, but the covenant he mediated is no longer the final word. The Law, the plagues, the sea crossing, and even Sinai itself become signposts. Christ is seen not only as the fulfillment of the Law, but as the one who offers a new exodus—this time from sin, not Egypt; through grace, not stone tablets; into a kingdom not built on thunder, but on spirit and truth.

The Qur'anic account of Moses and Pharaoh, presented across multiple surahs—most notably Surah 7 (Al-Aʿrāf), Surah 10 (Yūnus), Surah 20 (Ṭāhā), and Surah 26 (Ash-Shuʿarā)—retains the core structure of confrontation and deliverance but introduces distinct emphases that differentiate it from the biblical narrative. The text is rich in dialogue, embedding long speeches and exchanges between Moses, Pharaoh, and God, and emphasizes themes of divine guidance, human arrogance, and moral clarity. Unlike in Exodus, where the narrative unfolds with a strong external focus on events, the Qur'an dramatizes the inner disposition of characters, especially Pharaoh, whose defiance becomes existential as well as political.

One of the most striking features is the sheer volume of direct speech. The Qur'an turns the confrontation into a verbal battle as much as a physical or miraculous one. Moses speaks not

only to Pharaoh but directly with God at length, receiving reassurance and instruction. When Moses fears confrontation, God says to him and his brother Aaron: “Go to Pharaoh. Indeed, he has transgressed. But speak to him with gentle speech that perhaps he may be reminded or fear [God].” (Surah 20:43–44) The conversation unfolds as a sustained argument rather than a succession of plagues. Pharaoh challenges Moses, accuses him of sorcery, and demands allegiance. Moses responds not just with miracles but with claims of moral and divine truth.

Magic plays a major role. When Moses throws down his staff and it becomes a serpent, Pharaoh calls magicians from across the kingdom. They perform their spells, and for a moment the scene becomes one of spectacle. But Moses’s staff swallows their illusions. This is not just a contest of power—it is a trial of truth. The magicians, upon witnessing the miracle, fall prostrate and declare faith in “the Lord of Moses and Aaron.” (Surah 20:70) Pharaoh, enraged, threatens them with crucifixion. Their response—“We will never prefer you over what has come to us of clear proofs”—marks a turning point. The Qur’an transforms the magicians from entertainers into martyrs, defenders of truth against tyranny.

Pharaoh himself is portrayed as a figure of extreme arrogance. He is not simply a political ruler who refuses to free slaves—he is a man who declares himself divine. In Surah 79:24, Pharaoh says, “I am your most exalted lord.” In Surah 28:38, he commands: “O Hāmān, build for me a tower that I might reach the heavens and look upon the God of Moses, though I think he is a liar.” This claim to divinity intensifies the stakes of his defiance. Pharaoh is not resisting freedom—he is challenging the very sovereignty of God.

The Qur’an emphasizes that Pharaoh’s downfall is a direct result of his arrogance and injustice. His heart is not simply hardened; he is willfully blind to truth. When the sea parts and Moses and his people cross, Pharaoh follows, only to be drowned. In his final moment, he says: “I believe that there is no deity except the One in whom the Children of Israel have believed, and I am of the Muslims.” (Surah 10:90) But it is too late. God replies: “Now? When you had disobeyed before and were of the corrupters?” (10:91) His confession is rejected—not because belief is unwelcome, but because it comes at the moment of judgment, not repentance.

The Qur’an’s telling of the Moses-Pharaoh encounter is ultimately a story about the voice of revelation against the illusion of power. The heavy use of dialogue reflects its function as a living scripture meant to be heard, recited, and internalized. Pharaoh becomes the archetype of tyrannical pride; Moses, the model of prophetic patience and courage. Magic serves as a dramatic vehicle but is quickly absorbed into the moral narrative—the signs are clear, yet the arrogant reject them. God’s justice is final, but always preceded by mercy and warning.

In this version, the literal details—speeches, miracles, and confessions—serve a pedagogical function. The confrontation is not just an event of history, but a pattern for recognizing the struggle between truth and falsehood, humility and pride, guidance and resistance. Moses stands not only as a liberator, but as a caller to God, armed with words, signs, and unwavering faith. Pharaoh, in claiming divinity, brings about his own undoing, and the sea swallows not just a king, but a symbol of human arrogance before divine truth.

The portrayal of divine intervention in the story of Moses across the scriptures reveals a significant divergence in how the supernatural is framed—whether as miraculous events, symbolic signs, or communicative acts. Similarly, the medium of divine law—whether engraved tablets or oral recitation—further reflects each text's theology of revelation. These differences are not just stylistic but foundational, shaping how divine authority, human response, and sacred memory are understood.

In the Hebrew Bible, the ten plagues and the splitting of the Red Sea are literal miracles—interventions that suspend natural law and manifest God's power openly. Each plague escalates in scope and severity, targeting Egypt's economy, ecology, and religious symbols. These are not presented as signs requiring interpretation, but as direct acts of God with immediate, undeniable effect. The narrative emphasizes that these miracles demonstrate God's supremacy: "That you may know that there is none like the Lord our God." (Exodus 8:10)

The culmination of divine communication in Exodus is the giving of the Law on stone tablets. These are physical objects, written "with the finger of God." (Exodus 31:18) They are broken by Moses in anger and then rewritten—fixed, enduring, and concrete. The tablets symbolize permanence, divine authority, and the foundational nature of law for Israel. The medium reflects the message: law is unchanging and must be obeyed. Revelation is encoded in material form, not just for memorization but for safeguarding, bearing legal weight, and covenantal permanence.

In the Christian New Testament, miracles still occur, but they are rarely large-scale national events. They are signs, particularly in the Gospel of John, where Jesus's miracles are explicitly called "signs" (*sēmeia*), pointing to his identity and divine mission. The emphasis is not on spectacle but on spiritual meaning. For example, when Jesus heals, feeds, or raises the dead, the acts are not just marvels but revelations—proofs that God is at work through him. The feeding of the five thousand recalls the wilderness manna, but Jesus interprets it symbolically: "I am the bread of life." The miracle points beyond itself to theological truth.

When it comes to law, Jesus reconfigures the concept. In the Sermon on the Mount, he references the tablets—"You have heard it said… but I say to you…"—not to discard them, but to internalize them. The law moves from external inscription to internal transformation. Paul later describes this shift in 2 Corinthians 3:3: "You are a letter of Christ… written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts." The law becomes embodied, spiritualized, fulfilled in the person of Christ rather than preserved on stone.

In the Qur'an, the divine acts performed by Moses are consistently referred to as *āyāt*—signs—not simply miracles. The staff becoming a serpent, the parting of the sea, the hand glowing white, and the flood, locusts, and blood inflicted upon Egypt are all signs pointing to divine truth. These signs are not random wonders but purposeful indicators of God's message. Belief is not demanded by overwhelming power alone but by recognition of these signs as tokens of truth. Pharaoh and his people are condemned not because they lacked evidence, but

because they willfully denied what was made clear. This distinction shifts the emphasis from awe to accountability.

The transmission of divine law in the Qur'an also departs sharply from the image of tablets. While it acknowledges that Moses was given tablets—"We wrote for him on the tablets something of all things: an admonition and explanation of all things" (Surah 7:145)—the Qur'anic model of revelation is auditory and recitational. The Qur'an is a "recitation" (*qur'an*) delivered orally over time, meant to be heard, memorized, and repeated. Its form mirrors its function: living guidance that interacts with the human voice and memory. Revelation in the Qur'anic worldview is dynamic, ongoing, and vocal—less about fixed inscription and more about continual presence.

These literal differences—miracle versus sign, stone versus speech—shape the character of each tradition. The Hebrew Bible portrays divine power as demonstrative and unambiguous, and the law as fixed in stone. The New Testament converts miracle into spiritual sign and shifts the law into the interior moral self. The Qur'an treats wonders as signs of truth to be recognized through moral insight and emphasizes recitation as the enduring mode of divine-human communication.

Thus, the message is not only in what is said, but how it is delivered. A stone tablet, a sermon, a revealed verse—each form reflects its scripture's understanding of what it means for God to speak, and for humanity to listen.

When comparing the literal record and phrasing of the confrontations between Moses and Pharaoh in the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Qur'an, the texts present not only different sequences of events but also distinct rhetorical tones and theological intentions. Each version preserves dialogue and encounter in its own voice—shaped by language, audience, and message. These differences in wording, order, and intensity reveal how each scripture casts the confrontation between divine messenger and imperial power.

In the Hebrew Bible, the Book of Exodus offers the most detailed and chronologically ordered record. The confrontations are direct, formulaic, and escalate systematically. God instructs Moses to speak to Pharaoh: "Let my people go, that they may serve me." (Exodus 7:16) This line is repeated almost verbatim across the plagues, signaling divine insistence. Pharaoh responds with rejection, counter-demands, or temporary concessions. Often, the narrative includes the phrase "Pharaoh hardened his heart" or "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart," emphasizing resistance as a divine and human interplay.

Each plague is introduced with a declaration or warning. For example, before the first plague: "Thus saith the Lord, In this thou shalt know that I am the Lord: behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters." (Exodus 7:17) The narrative structure follows a regular cycle: command, refusal, plague, plea, and again refusal. The tone is formal and judicial. Pharaoh's words shift from arrogant denial—"Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" (Exodus 5:2)—to panic as the plagues intensify, and finally to grief and defeat with the death of his firstborn.

The New Testament contains no new record of the confrontation but refers back to it as theological precedent. Romans 9:17 quotes Exodus: “For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: ‘I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.’” Here, Pharaoh becomes a symbol—his historical actions turned into an illustration of divine sovereignty. The events are remembered not for their narrative shape, but for the lessons they serve. In Hebrews and Acts, Moses is praised as a man of faith and courage, but the actual phrasing of his confrontations is not retold.

In the Qur’an, the encounter is recorded in numerous places, with significant attention to speech. Moses says: “O Pharaoh, I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds, [obligated] not to say about Allah except the truth.” (Surah 7:104–105) The call is not merely to release the Israelites, but to acknowledge divine authority. Pharaoh replies: “Did we not raise you among us as a child, and you remained among us for years of your life?” (26:18) This retort introduces a personal tone absent in Exodus—Pharaoh attempts to undermine Moses’s authority by reminding him of his origins.

Pharaoh also accuses Moses of madness or sorcery: “Indeed, your messenger who has been sent to you is mad.” (26:27) Moses counters with rational argument and signs: “He who brings guidance and follows the right path shall be safe.” (20:47) The confrontation is prolonged, richly dialogic, and laced with warnings: “Woe to you! Do not fabricate lies against Allah.” (20:61) In multiple surahs, God reassures Moses and Aaron: “Fear not. Indeed, I am with you both; I hear and see.” (20:46)

A notable feature of the Qur’anic version is the repeated use of direct divine speech throughout the confrontation. God commands, corrects, and comforts. After each rejection, Pharaoh’s arrogance deepens: “I am your most exalted lord.” (79:24) Even after seeing the signs, he remains obstinate, and only at the moment of drowning does he cry out belief—“I believe that there is no deity except the one in whom the Children of Israel believe.” (10:90) —to which God replies with a rebuke, not salvation.

In comparing the literal phrasing: Exodus delivers a sequence of formal pronouncements framed in legal and covenantal tone; the New Testament references the event typologically, not narratively; and the Qur’an transforms the encounter into a dramatic dialogue emphasizing prophetic speech, defiance, and divine vindication. Each confrontation is cast not only as historical, but as revelatory—showing how truth meets power, how signs meet denial, and how divine authority speaks into resistance.

The phrasing matters: “Let my people go,” “I am a messenger from the Lord,” “Who is the Lord?”—these lines are not just record, but scripture. They speak differently, in different voices, for different communities. Yet in all, they echo the same clash: a servant speaks, a tyrant resists, and God prevails.

The Ten Commandments and Divine Law

In the Torah, the giving of the Ten Commandments stands as one of the most pivotal and defining moments in the narrative of the Israelites. It marks not only a legal milestone but a theophany—a direct and unmediated encounter between God and a people. The commandments are introduced in Exodus 20 and again reiterated in Deuteronomy 5, framing them as the very words of God, spoken aloud to the gathered nation and later inscribed on tablets of stone. The event is presented not merely as a divine communication but as the foundation of a covenantal relationship grounded in law, responsibility, and holiness.

The moment of revelation at Mount Sinai is described with awe and terror. The mountain is enveloped in smoke, thunder, lightning, and the sound of a shofar. The people tremble. "And God spoke all these words, saying…" (Exodus 20:1). The commandments are not whispered in private or revealed only to Moses; they are proclaimed publicly, a divine address to an entire nation. This directness underscores their importance and non-negotiable authority. The people, overwhelmed by the intensity of the experience, beg Moses to mediate thereafter: "Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." (Exodus 20:19)

The commandments themselves are concise, absolute, and framed in universal moral imperatives. They begin with a declaration of identity: "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." This historical preface grounds the law in the reality of liberation. It is not a distant decree but the command of the One who has already acted on Israel's behalf. The laws that follow include both duties to God—no other gods, no idols, reverence for the divine name, and sanctification of the Sabbath—and duties to others: honor for parents, prohibitions against murder, adultery, theft, false testimony, and coveting.

These ten commandments form the heart of the Torah's broader legal code, but their manner of delivery sets them apart. According to Exodus 31:18, after the forty days on the mountain, God gives Moses "two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God." The physicality of these tablets—etched by divine hand—underscores their permanence and sanctity. Unlike later laws conveyed through Moses, these come with unmatched directness and authority.

When Moses descends and finds the people worshiping the golden calf, he smashes the tablets in anger. Later, new tablets are carved, and God again inscribes them (Exodus 34:1). This second writing restores the covenant and affirms the enduring nature of divine law despite human failure. The tablets are eventually placed inside the Ark of the Covenant, the physical and spiritual centerpiece of Israelite worship.

The Torah thus presents the Ten Commandments not just as laws, but as divine utterance and permanent covenant. Their literal form—written on stone, spoken by God, carried in the ark—symbolizes the unchanging nature of God's will and the foundational role of law in defining the identity and mission of Israel. In this narrative, law is not only legislation; it is revelation, inscribed on stone and intended to be engraved upon the heart of a people chosen to walk in obedience and justice.

In the Gospels, the Ten Commandments remain a reference point of divine moral instruction, but their role shifts from external regulation to internal transformation. Jesus does not discard the law of Moses; rather, he reframes its meaning and purpose. The commandments are still affirmed, but the focus moves toward their inner essence—the intentions, thoughts, and spiritual posture behind outward obedience. This shift is central to the Gospel message: the fulfillment of the law through a deeper righteousness that originates in the heart.

In Matthew 5–7, the Sermon on the Mount functions as Jesus' reinterpretation of the law. He explicitly addresses the commandments: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." (Matthew 5:17) This statement establishes continuity rather than rupture. Jesus positions himself as the one who brings the law to its full meaning—not in the sense of simply reiterating rules, but in revealing their complete moral and spiritual depth.

Jesus then presents a series of teachings where he contrasts external adherence with internal righteousness. "You have heard that it was said… but I say to you…" These phrases introduce expansions of the commandments that dig beneath the literal wording. For example, "You shall not murder" becomes a call to avoid anger and insult. "You shall not commit adultery" is extended to include lustful thoughts. These are not new laws, but intensifications—amplifications that expose the heart as the true battleground of obedience. In this way, Jesus internalizes the law, making moral purity a matter of inward transformation rather than outward compliance.

When asked which commandment is greatest, Jesus answers with the Shema and Leviticus 19:18: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart… and your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:37–39) He then adds, "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." This encapsulation suggests that love is not merely one law among many, but the framework through which all commandments are understood. The Ten Commandments, viewed through this lens, are expressions of love—toward God in the first four, and toward others in the final six.

The Gospel of John further shifts the focus from written code to divine person. Jesus is described as the Word made flesh (John 1:14), and in him, the will of God is made visible and personal. Law becomes embodied. The commandment Jesus gives in John 13:34—"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you"—is both a continuation and a transformation of previous commandments. The model is no longer just written instruction but the life and actions of Christ himself.

In this Gospel vision, fulfillment of the law is not legal perfection, but faithful imitation of Jesus. The transformation of the heart replaces the rigidity of the letter. This theme is echoed in Paul's writings, though outside the Gospels, where the law is described as a tutor or guardian until Christ, who brings a higher righteousness not based on written code but on the Spirit.

Thus, in the Gospels, the Ten Commandments are not abandoned—they are fulfilled through deeper understanding, internalized morality, and radical love. The stone tablets remain

respected, but their true intention is unveiled. Law is no longer only external obligation, but an inward disposition, written not on tablets of stone but on the human heart, through the presence and example of Jesus.

The Qur'an does not present the Ten Commandments in a single, consolidated list as found in the Torah, nor does it replicate their exact phrasing. However, the essential moral principles they represent are echoed across numerous verses, interwoven with guidance that emphasizes ethical conduct, worship, justice, and societal responsibility. The Qur'anic approach to divine law is not one of codified enumeration, but of integrated revelation—laws and moral imperatives appear within context, often linked to reminders of past communities and exhortations to righteousness.

One of the closest parallels to the Ten Commandments appears in Surah 6:151–153, where God instructs the Prophet Muhammad to recite a series of moral directives: "Say, 'Come, I will recite what your Lord has prohibited to you: that you not associate anything with Him, and to parents, good treatment, and do not kill your children out of poverty... do not approach immoralities, whether openly or secretly... and do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden, except by right... and do not approach the orphan's property... and give full measure and weight in justice...'" These verses conclude with a command to follow the straight path and not divide it. While not numbered or labeled, the content aligns with major ethical themes of the Mosaic commands: monotheism, honoring parents, prohibitions against murder and injustice, and moral discipline.

Elsewhere, Surah 17:22–39 presents another extended list of moral and legal instructions. These verses address polytheism, respect for parents, prohibition of murder, economic justice, humility, and modesty. Verse 23 begins: "Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and to parents, good treatment." The structure here is instructional rather than juridical. It reflects the Qur'anic style—law embedded within appeals to conscience, often surrounded by reminders of divine mercy, the afterlife, and historical precedent.

Unlike the Torah, the Qur'an places little emphasis on a singular, dramatic event of lawgiving such as Sinai. While it affirms that Moses received tablets—"And We wrote for him on the tablets something of all things, an admonition and a detailed explanation of all things" (Surah 7:145)—the Qur'an itself is presented not as a fixed object but as a living recitation, revealed gradually and preserved through oral and written transmission. This format underlines a different theological model: guidance as continual and responsive rather than once-delivered and carved in stone.

The Qur'anic commandments are often embedded in broader narratives or moral commentary. The emphasis is not on a numbered code but on the principles of *taqwa* (God-consciousness), *adl* (justice), and *rahma* (mercy). The Qur'an does not prohibit coveting in the specific form found in the Torah, but it repeatedly condemns envy, arrogance, and corruption. Adultery, theft, and false testimony are all explicitly prohibited in separate verses, often accompanied by prescribed consequences or moral reasoning.

Furthermore, the Qur'an places unique emphasis on intention and sincerity. It frequently reminds that God knows what is in the hearts and that external compliance is insufficient without inner alignment. This parallels, though distinctively from, the Gospel's internalization of the law, yet remains grounded in outward acts of obedience defined by divine instruction.

In summary, the Qur'an upholds the moral substance of the Ten Commandments but delivers them in dispersed form, through recited guidance, embedded in narrative, and reinforced by divine commentary. The format is different, the phrasing is distinct, and the emphasis shifts toward living awareness of God in every act, rather than a static list engraved once. Divine law in the Qur'an is part of a continuous unfolding—a guide revealed not on stone tablets alone, but through speech, memory, and the sustained moral education of a community of believers.

A literal comparison of how divine law was transmitted across the Torah, the Gospels, and the Qur'an reveals foundational differences not only in content but in the mode and medium of delivery. Each tradition emphasizes a unique process of giving the law—written by divine hand, spoken and fulfilled in person, or revealed in recited form—and these modes shape the understanding of how sacred law is to be approached, preserved, and lived.

In the Torah, the law is most tangibly given in writing. The Ten Commandments, and by extension the wider legal code, are described as being etched into stone tablets by God Himself. "And He gave unto Moses… two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God." (Exodus 31:18) This image of divine inscription conveys permanence and authority. The law is material, fixed, and preserved physically within the Ark of the Covenant, which becomes the central symbol of Israel's bond with God. Moses acts as the receiver and custodian, but the words themselves originate in the unmediated voice of God and are physically manifested in stone. Later commandments and legal judgments, spanning Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, are recorded by scribes and embedded into written Torah scrolls—an enduring textual tradition that defines Jewish legal and liturgical life.

In the Gospels, the medium of the law shifts from inscription to incarnation. Jesus does not receive a new set of written laws but instead speaks, teaches, and fulfills existing ones. His interpretation of the law is delivered orally, in sermons, parables, and direct confrontation. He states, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." (Matthew 24:35) His authority is not in scroll or stone, but in his person. The Gospel text itself, written decades after Jesus' ministry, records these teachings, but Jesus' own mode was deeply oral and relational. When he reinterprets commandments—e.g., turning the prohibition of murder into a call against anger—it is spoken as immediate teaching, not as codified law. In this sense, the law is preserved not by new inscription, but through memory, discipleship, and eventually Gospel writing. Jesus becomes the living Torah, with the law fulfilled and embodied in him, rather than externally handed down.

In the Qur'an, the method of lawgiving is recitation, preserved through both oral and written means from the beginning. The Qur'an's name itself, derived from the root *q-r-'*, means

recitation. It was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad over a period of twenty-three years through the Angel Jibril (Gabriel), and recited aloud to his followers. The Qur'an declares: "Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an that you might understand." (Surah 12:2) The early Muslims memorized and repeated the verses, and scribes began writing them down on parchment, leather, and bones. Soon after the Prophet's death, under Caliph Uthman, the Qur'anic text was compiled into a single written form to ensure uniformity.

The law in the Qur'an is thus transmitted both by voice and by pen. The revelation insists on the importance of both media. "By the pen and what they inscribe..." (Surah 68:1) and "We have certainly made the Qur'an easy to remember, so is there any who will remember?" (Surah 54:17) These verses emphasize that preservation is both cognitive and textual. Revelation is not static—it is alive in the speech of the believers and safeguarded in writing, unified and unaltered.

Taken together, the three traditions illustrate a progression of divine communication in literal terms. The Torah emphasizes divine authorship on stone and the custodianship of a written covenant. The Gospels depict the law being spoken, interpreted, and lived through Christ, without the issuing of a new document. The Qur'an presents the law as revealed in oral sequences and rigorously preserved in written scripture and memorization.

Each method carries theological weight. The written tablets convey unchanging divine decree. The living voice of Christ shifts focus to personal transformation. The recitation of the Qur'an bridges oral and written, making the act of preservation a communal and devotional practice. Thus, how law was given—whether carved, spoken, or recited—shapes how it continues to be heard, obeyed, and honored in each tradition.

A direct comparison of four central commandments—observance of the Sabbath, prohibition of idolatry, prohibition of killing, and prohibition of adultery—reveals both shared ethical foundations and notable differences in emphasis and context across the Torah, the Gospels, and the Qur'an. While the moral core remains recognizable, the framing, scope, and implementation of these laws vary according to each scripture's theological structure and historical setting.

The Sabbath commandment in the Torah is explicit, rooted in divine creation and covenant identity. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy… for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth… and rested the seventh day." (Exodus 20:8–11) Observance includes cessation from labor and is framed as a sign between God and Israel. It is legally enforced and central to Jewish religious rhythm. In the Gospels, Jesus upholds the Sabbath but redefines its purpose. When challenged for healing on the Sabbath, he responds, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." (Mark 2:27) The day remains sacred, but mercy and need take precedence over ritual strictness. In the Qur'an, the Sabbath is acknowledged as a covenantal obligation for Jews: "Indeed, the Sabbath was only imposed on those who differed about it." (Surah 16:124) It is not required of Muslims, though the Qur'an condemns those who violated it by transgressing divine instruction, such as the story of the Sabbath-breakers turned into apes (Surah 2:65), making it an ethical warning rather than a standing obligation.

On idolatry, all three scriptures are unequivocal, but the Qur'an and Torah treat it with sharper legislative intensity. The Torah's first commandment demands exclusive worship: "You shall have no other gods before Me." It prohibits carved images and declares God as jealous. Idolatry leads to covenant rupture and collective punishment. The Qur'an similarly insists on absolute monotheism. Associating partners with God (*shirk*) is the gravest sin: "Indeed, Allah does not forgive associating partners with Him." (Surah 4:48) Idolatry is a central theme of Qur'anic polemic against paganism, and the dismantling of idols is both spiritual and literal, as in Abraham's challenge to his people. In the Gospels, idolatry is not a dominant theme, as Jesus addresses a largely monotheistic Jewish audience. However, warnings persist against serving wealth and worldly attachments: "You cannot serve both God and mammon." (Matthew 6:24) The heart, again, is the battleground for loyalty.

The prohibition against killing is central to all three texts, though its application and explanation differ. In the Torah: "You shall not murder." (Exodus 20:13) The law distinguishes between murder and sanctioned killing, as seen in war or punishment. The command protects life but is part of a broader legal system with judicial remedies. In the Gospels, Jesus intensifies the command: "You have heard… 'You shall not kill'; but I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment." (Matthew 5:21–22) The prohibition is extended to include hatred, verbal abuse, and internal violence. The Qur'an restates the sanctity of life with force: "Whoever kills a soul… it is as if he had slain mankind entirely." (Surah 5:32) Killing is categorically condemned except in cases of just cause—murder or corruption. Justice is permitted, but vengeance is restrained by law.

Adultery, likewise, is universally condemned. In the Torah, it is a capital offense: "You shall not commit adultery." (Exodus 20:14) The punishment is death, reflecting its gravity as a betrayal of both marriage and community. In the Gospels, Jesus again internalizes the law: "Whoever looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:28) This inward turn places emphasis on thought and intention, not just the physical act. The Qur'an addresses adultery (zina) with detailed legal implications: "Do not approach unlawful sexual intercourse. Indeed, it is ever an immorality and is evil as a way." (Surah 17:32) The prescribed punishment—public flogging for proven adultery (Surah 24:2)—requires four eyewitnesses, setting a high bar for conviction and thus limiting misuse. The Qur'an also condemns slander and false accusation regarding chastity, further emphasizing personal and communal honor.

In conclusion, these four laws reflect a shared moral framework: sanctity of worship, life, family, and rest. Yet the literal expression and enforcement of each commandment differ. The Torah defines them in legal and national terms, etched in stone and central to covenant. The Gospels spiritualize and fulfill them, turning attention to the inner moral life. The Qur'an reinforces their core meaning with warnings, recitation, and legal boundaries, adapting them to a broader prophetic message aimed at restoring monotheism and ethical clarity. The laws remain, but each scripture shapes them to fit its vision of divine-human responsibility.

Jesus – Prophet, Son, or God?

In the Gospels, Jesus is introduced and portrayed not merely as a teacher or moral reformer but as the Son of God, the incarnate Word, and the agent of divine power. These titles are not metaphorical embellishments but central declarations about his identity, mission, and the nature of his relationship to God. From the opening verses of the Gospel of John to the climactic resurrection scenes, the Gospels present Jesus as both divine and human—God entering the world in visible, tangible form, performing miracles as signs of his authority and compassion.

The Gospel of John begins with a sweeping theological prologue: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God… and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." (John 1:1, 14) Here, Jesus is not just sent by God—he is the Logos, the eternal divine Word, through whom all things were made. This identification with divine preexistence and creative agency marks Jesus not as a creature, but as co-eternal with God. His taking on flesh is not symbolic but literal, a central event in Christian theology known as the Incarnation. The phrase "dwelt among us" evokes the imagery of God's tabernacle presence in the Hebrew Bible, now embodied in a person.

The Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—do not begin with cosmic declarations but introduce Jesus through prophecy, birth narratives, and the voice from heaven at his baptism. When Jesus is baptized by John in the Jordan, a voice declares, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17) This divine affirmation, repeated at the Transfiguration, presents Jesus as uniquely set apart, not just a prophet or messenger, but the one in whom God's presence is especially manifest. His title as "Son of God" appears repeatedly, not only from divine speech but from demons who recognize him, disciples who follow him, and from his own declarations.

Miracles are a defining feature of Jesus' public ministry. He heals the sick, restores sight to the blind, calms storms, multiplies food, and raises the dead. These acts are not performed as demonstrations of raw power but as signs of the kingdom of God breaking into the world. In the Gospel of John, miracles are consistently called "signs"—and each one reveals something about Jesus' identity. Turning water into wine at Cana is more than a marvel; it signals joy, transformation, and divine abundance. The raising of Lazarus, perhaps the most powerful of all, is explicitly tied to belief in his divine nature: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live." (John 11:25)

Yet Jesus also refers to himself as the "Son of Man," a term with deep roots in Jewish apocalyptic literature, particularly in the Book of Daniel. In Daniel 7, the "Son of Man" is a heavenly figure given dominion and glory. Jesus uses this term frequently, blending his earthly humility with eschatological authority. This dual identity—Son of God and Son of Man—allows the Gospels to hold together divinity and humanity without diminishing either.

The culmination of the Gospel narrative, the crucifixion and resurrection, is presented not as a tragic end but as the necessary fulfillment of divine purpose. The resurrection affirms Jesus'

claims and solidifies his divine status. After his rising, Thomas exclaims, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28), a declaration left uncorrected by Jesus and included as a climactic confession of faith.

In sum, the Gospels present Jesus as the divine Son of God, the Word made flesh, whose miracles are not only acts of mercy but affirmations of identity. He is both human and divine, suffering and exalted, born in time yet preexistent. His words, deeds, and self-understanding form a portrait that leaves little room for reduction to mere prophet. Instead, he is presented as the one through whom God speaks, acts, and ultimately redeems—a claim that becomes central to Christian faith and sharply distinct from both Jewish expectation and later Islamic interpretation.

Within the Hebrew Bible, the concept of the messiah—*mashiach*, meaning “anointed one”—exists primarily within the framework of kingship, deliverance, and divine appointment, but not as a divine or incarnate being. The messiah is expected as a human figure, a descendant of David, chosen by God to lead, restore, and uphold justice. Nowhere in the Hebrew scriptures is the messiah explicitly described as divine in essence or preexistent in nature. The messianic hope is rooted in covenantal history, national restoration, and eschatological anticipation, but it remains grounded in the realm of human leadership guided by divine favor.

The term *mashiach* appears in various contexts throughout the Hebrew Bible. It refers most frequently to priests and kings anointed for service, including Saul, David, and Solomon. Even foreign figures, like Cyrus the Persian in Isaiah 45:1, are called God’s anointed, indicating selection for a specific role rather than a singular, redemptive messianic office. The idea of a future messiah arises most clearly in prophetic books such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, but always as a figure through whom God acts, not as God Himself.

Isaiah 11 envisions a descendant of Jesse—David’s father—who will rule with righteousness and restore peace. “The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him… with righteousness he shall judge the poor.” This figure is imbued with wisdom and divine support, but remains distinct from divinity itself. He is a ruler empowered by the Spirit, not the embodiment of God. Likewise, Jeremiah 23:5 speaks of a “righteous Branch” from David’s line who “shall reign as king and deal wisely.” Again, the emphasis is on just leadership, not divine incarnation.

Even the famous “Immanuel” prophecy in Isaiah 7:14—“Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel”—is not clearly a messianic or divine declaration in its original context. It serves as a sign to King Ahaz regarding immediate political events. While later Christian interpretation applies it to Jesus, the Hebrew Bible presents it as a sign of divine presence through deliverance, not the arrival of God in human form.

Daniel 7 introduces the vision of “one like a son of man” coming with the clouds of heaven, receiving dominion and glory. This figure has fueled much messianic speculation, particularly for its exalted role and divine-like reception. Yet even here, the identity remains

ambiguous—possibly a symbol of Israel, possibly a heavenly agent, but not explicitly divine or incarnate in the manner later assigned to Jesus.

Moreover, the Hebrew Bible consistently reinforces the uniqueness and indivisibility of God. “I am the Lord, and there is no other; besides me there is no god.” (Isaiah 45:5) Deuteronomy 6:4 declares the foundational Shema: “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one.” This theological foundation leaves little room for a divine messiah without significantly reinterpreting the biblical framework. Prophets are vessels of God’s word, kings are agents of His will, and the messiah, if awaited, is a servant of divine justice—not God incarnate.

Thus, in the Hebrew Bible, the messiah is a future anointed one, expected to restore Israel’s fortunes, reign with righteousness, and renew covenantal faithfulness. The figure may be exalted in mission, but he remains human, never divine. The Gospels’ portrayal of Jesus as Son of God and Word made flesh represents a theological development that stands apart from the expectations and categories of the Hebrew scriptures. It introduces a new dimension—divine incarnation—that has no direct precedent in the Jewish messianic imagination as preserved in the Hebrew Bible.

In the Qur’an, Jesus—referred to as ʿĪsā ibn Maryam, or Jesus son of Mary—is held in exceptionally high regard as a prophet, messenger, and bearer of divine signs, but not as divine himself. The Qur’an affirms his miraculous birth, his prophetic mission, and his ability to perform wonders, yet it decisively rejects the idea that he is the Son of God or part of a divine trinity. It also denies the crucifixion, offering an alternative account that distinguishes the Islamic view sharply from Christian theology.

Jesus’s virgin birth is affirmed in detail in Surah 19 (Maryam). The angel announces to Mary: “Indeed, I am only a messenger of your Lord to grant you a pure boy.” (19:19) Mary responds with astonishment, asking how she could bear a child when no man has touched her. The reply underscores the creative power of God: “It is easy for Me.” (19:21) The child is born through divine will, without human father, paralleling but not equating with the creation of Adam. In Surah 3:59, the Qur’an explicitly makes this comparison: “Indeed, the example of Jesus to Allah is like that of Adam. He created him from dust; then He said to him, ‘Be,’ and he was.” This framing situates Jesus as a miraculous creation, not a begotten son.

While Jesus is called “al-Masih” (the Messiah), this title does not carry divine implication in the Qur’an. Instead, he is described as “a word from Him and a spirit from Him” (Surah 4:171), phrases that highlight his role as a bearer of God’s command, not God Himself. The Qur’an instructs believers not to exaggerate his status: “Do not say, ‘Three.’ Desist—it is better for you. Indeed, Allah is but one God. Exalted is He above having a son.” (4:171) This verse, and others like it, reject any theological elevation of Jesus to divine rank. The Qur’an does not deny Jesus’ special role, but it firmly confines it within the boundaries of prophethood.

Miracles are attributed to Jesus, but always by God’s permission. He speaks from the cradle, heals the blind and lepers, breathes life into clay birds, and raises the dead—yet each act is preceded or followed by the phrase “by permission of Allah.” (Surah 5:110) These miracles

confirm his prophethood and function as signs (*āyāt*) of divine power, not as independent demonstrations of divine nature. Jesus is a servant and messenger, not a divine being acting on his own authority.

Perhaps the most significant divergence from the Christian account is the Qur'an's denial of the crucifixion. Surah 4:157–158 states: "They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him; but it was made to appear so to them… Rather, Allah raised him to Himself." This verse has been interpreted in various ways, but the core claim is clear: Jesus did not die on the cross. Instead, he was spared, and someone else—possibly made to resemble him—was crucified in his place. The Qur'an offers no detailed narrative of how this substitution occurred, and the ambiguity has allowed for a range of interpretations, but the theological point is emphatic: Jesus was not humiliated by death, nor was he abandoned by God.

The Qur'anic view thus maintains Jesus' honor, affirms his miraculous origin and prophetic mission, but draws a definitive line against any suggestion of divinity, incarnation, or atoning death. He is neither the Son of God nor part of a trinity; he is a chosen messenger, born of a virgin, filled with wisdom, and lifted by God. This portrayal situates Jesus in continuity with earlier prophets and aligns him with Islamic monotheism, preserving his dignity without transgressing the Qur'an's strict conception of divine unity.

In the Islamic narrative, Jesus's true message is said to have been distorted by later followers, and the Qur'an positions itself as the correction of that distortion—restoring him as a prophet who preached submission to God (*Islam*), not as a divine redeemer. In this retelling, Jesus remains a revered figure, but his life and mission are firmly interpreted through the lens of tawhid—the uncompromising oneness of God.

Examining the literal Jesus across the Torah, Gospels, and Qur'an reveals not only distinct theological portraits but also contrasting narrative emphases in his recorded words, miracles, and silences. Although Jesus does not appear in the Hebrew Bible, his anticipated role is often retroactively linked to earlier prophetic traditions by later interpreters. In the Gospels and the Qur'an, however, he is presented through his own sayings, his miraculous acts, and the moments where his silence—or absence of speech—carries meaning. What emerges is a triptych: a speaking Jesus of authoritative tone in the Gospels, a declarative Jesus of mission and miracle in the Qur'an, and a messianic expectation interpreted only later in the light of his words.

In the Gospels, Jesus speaks in parables, aphorisms, prayers, and direct declarations of identity. His words are foundational. "I am the way, the truth, and the life." (John 14:6) "Before Abraham was, I am." (John 8:58) "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5) His teachings are poetic yet radical, moral yet mystical. He addresses the crowds with stories, engages critics with questions, and comforts the afflicted with assurance. His voice is the centerpiece of the narrative, and silence is rare and usually symbolic—such as his refusal to answer Pilate's questions, an act loaded with prophetic fulfillment and quiet defiance.

Jesus' signs in the Gospels reinforce his spoken claims. They are not isolated miracles, but performances with theological meaning. Turning water into wine reveals his transformative authority. Feeding thousands demonstrates divine provision. Calming the storm and walking on water illustrate command over nature. Raising Lazarus from the dead confirms dominion over life itself. These signs are narrated with detail and tension, and always point beyond themselves to his identity as Son of God and Messiah. The crowd's reactions—wonder, faith, confusion, hostility—form part of the unfolding revelation.

In the Qur'an, Jesus also speaks, but less frequently and with a different tone. His words are prophetic proclamations, often brief but dense with theological weight. As an infant, he declares from the cradle: "Indeed, I am the servant of Allah. He has given me the Scripture and made me a prophet." (Surah 19:30) His role is defined in this first utterance: servant, not son; prophet, not deity. His later sayings include reminders of God's unity, appeals for faithfulness, and a statement of mission: "Indeed, Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him." (Surah 3:51) These words emphasize obedience and guidance, never self-glorification.

The Qur'anic Jesus performs miracles similar to those in the Gospels: healing the blind and leper, raising the dead, creating birds from clay. Each act is qualified: "by permission of Allah." (Surah 5:110) His signs confirm his prophethood and the truth of his message. Unlike in the Gospels, these events are usually listed rather than narrated in detail. The Qur'an offers no passion story, no parables, and no extended dialogue. Yet silence too is meaningful. The absence of Jesus' reaction to crucifixion events is deliberate—God speaks instead, declaring that Jesus was not killed but raised. Jesus' silence here becomes part of the theological correction the Qur'an intends.

In the Hebrew Bible, Jesus is absent by name or voice. However, later Christian interpretation identifies messianic foreshadowing in texts like Isaiah 53, which describes a suffering servant who "was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth." This image of silent suffering becomes, in Christian thought, a prophetic preview of Jesus before his accusers. But within the Hebrew Bible alone, these silences are not yet linked to Jesus; they belong to a wider prophetic and poetic tradition of faithful endurance.

The literal Jesus, then, speaks differently across texts. In the Gospels, his voice commands, comforts, and confronts. In the Qur'an, it instructs, testifies, and glorifies God. His signs in both are extraordinary, but in the Gospels they reflect divine authority within him, while in the Qur'an they reflect divine support of him. His silences—whether before Pilate or in the Qur'an's version of his departure—carry theological weight, inviting the reader to interpret what is left unsaid.

In sum, Jesus' sayings, signs, and silences across the three scriptures build overlapping yet divergent portraits. The Gospels offer the most detailed and personal record of his speech and action. The Qur'an presents a concise but reverent image of a prophet of power and purity. The Hebrew Bible, silent on Jesus himself, becomes the ground upon which later texts argue his identity. The literal Jesus, then, is not only what he says or does, but also what each tradition permits him to be.

A literal comparison of how Jesus is portrayed across the Gospels, the Hebrew Bible, and the Qur'an reveals a sharp divergence in what each tradition declares and denies about his identity. These differences are not only theological but textual, rooted in the actual language, structure, and emphasis of the scriptures themselves. Each text assigns Jesus a specific role, affirms particular truths, and draws boundaries around what he is not—resulting in three distinct portraits shaped by revelation, doctrine, and sacred narrative.

In the Gospels, Jesus is declared to be the Son of God, the Messiah, the Word made flesh, and the Redeemer. These declarations are explicit and repeated in both Jesus' words and the responses of those around him. The Gospel of John affirms his divine origin: "The Word was with God, and the Word was God… and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." (John 1:1,14) When Peter confesses, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus blesses him for divine insight. (Matthew 16:16–17) The voice at Jesus' baptism and transfiguration declares, "This is my beloved Son." (Matthew 3:17, 17:5) His authority to forgive sins, his claim of preexistence ("Before Abraham was, I am" – John 8:58), and his resurrection from the dead all serve to confirm his divine identity.

Yet within the same texts, certain things are denied or downplayed. Jesus denies being a political revolutionary or military leader. When questioned by Pilate, he says, "My kingdom is not of this world." (John 18:36) He often silences public declarations of his messianic role until the appointed time. Though he is worshipped, he never explicitly says, "I am God," but rather allows his words, works, and resurrection to speak that claim through implication and fulfillment.

The Hebrew Bible, in contrast, declares no direct statements about Jesus. It neither affirms nor denies his existence. However, later interpreted passages are often viewed through a messianic lens by Christian readers. Prophecies of a coming ruler from the line of David (Isaiah 11:1, Jeremiah 23:5), a suffering servant (Isaiah 53), and a figure "like a son of man" (Daniel 7:13–14) are retrospectively seen as prefiguring Jesus. Yet these texts do not name him, and in their original context, they declare hope in human leadership, divine justice, and national restoration. They deny nothing about Jesus per se, but they firmly uphold monotheism: "I am the Lord, and there is no other." (Isaiah 45:5) There is no space for divine incarnation or trinitarian implication.

The Qur'an, however, speaks directly about Jesus, declaring him as a prophet, messenger, Messiah, and servant of God. He is described as born of a virgin, honored in this world and the next, and one of the nearest to God. "The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a messenger of Allah and His word… and a spirit from Him." (Surah 4:171) He is revered, but never worshipped. The Qur'an categorically denies his divinity: "They have certainly disbelieved who say, 'Allah is the Messiah, the son of Mary.'" (5:72) It also denies the crucifixion: "They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but it was made to appear to them." (4:157)

In literal terms, the Qur'an declares Jesus' miracles—speaking from the cradle, healing the blind, raising the dead—performed by God's permission. It denies any biological sonship, any divine status, and any part in a trinity: "Say not 'Three.' Desist—it is better for you.

Indeed, Allah is but one God." (4:171) Jesus is instead presented as a sign of God's power and mercy, a righteous prophet sent to guide the Children of Israel, and a witness over his people. On the Day of Judgment, he will testify that he never claimed divinity: "I only said what You commanded me to say: 'Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord.'" (5:117)

Thus, in summary, the Gospels declare Jesus as divine and incarnate, while denying political ambition and earthly rule. The Hebrew Bible declares covenantal promises and moral law, denying or omitting any reference to a divine messiah. The Qur'an declares Jesus as prophet and miracle-worker, denying crucifixion, divinity, and sonship. Each text draws a boundary —affirming certain truths, rejecting others. In literal terms, Jesus' identity is shaped not just by what is said, but also by what is left unsaid, redefined, or reversed. These declarations and denials form the sharp theological edges around which centuries of faith, debate, and divergence have turned.

Mary and Her Story

In the Gospels, Mary—the mother of Jesus—occupies a revered yet restrained position, her presence felt more in gesture and implication than in frequent speech. She is central to the birth narratives and reappears at pivotal moments in Jesus' life, yet her voice is rare and her character understated. The narrative grants her a profound dignity not through long dialogue or overt authority, but through quiet obedience, emotional presence, and silent endurance.

In the Gospel of Luke, Mary is introduced with humility and grace. When the angel Gabriel greets her with the words, "Hail, favored one, the Lord is with you," (Luke 1:28) she is described as "greatly troubled" by the salutation. Her response is brief but deeply significant: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." (Luke 1:38) This moment, known as the Annunciation, encapsulates her acceptance of a divine role with quiet faith. The Magnificat—her song of praise in Luke 1:46–55—is one of the few extended speeches attributed to her, rich in echoes of Hebrew prophetic tradition, rejoicing in God's mercy and justice. Yet even here, she speaks not about herself, but about God's action in the world.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Mary speaks even less. She is betrothed to Joseph, becomes pregnant by the Holy Spirit, and is largely passive in the account. The narrative focuses more on Joseph's decisions and angelic dreams than on her inner life. Her role is crucial, yet she remains a silent figure through the unfolding events.

Mary appears again at the wedding at Cana in John's Gospel, where she prompts Jesus' first miracle by stating, "They have no wine." (John 2:3) Jesus responds, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come," a phrase whose tone has sparked varied interpretations. She does not reply directly but instructs the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." (John 2:5) This short exchange, though sparse, highlights her awareness of Jesus' hidden identity and her subtle role in initiating his public ministry.

Later, in the Synoptic Gospels, Mary seeks out Jesus with his brothers, concerned about his welfare. When told that his family is waiting, Jesus responds, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers? … Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.” (Matthew 12:48–50) This moment shifts the definition of kinship from biology to discipleship, and while not dismissive, it repositions Mary within the broader framework of spiritual community.

At the crucifixion, Mary is present, standing near the cross as her son suffers. In John’s Gospel, Jesus speaks to her in his final moments: “Woman, behold your son!” and to the disciple, “Behold your mother!” (John 19:26–27) This act of entrusting Mary to the care of the beloved disciple underscores her enduring presence and her silent witness to the end. No words are placed in her mouth, yet her presence speaks volumes—grief without protest, faith without fanfare.

The Gospels end with her last appearance in Acts 1:14, where she is among the disciples gathered in prayer after the ascension. She remains in the circle of believers, quietly integrated into the early Christian community.

Throughout the Gospels, Mary’s role is marked not by authority or theological discourse, but by her silent participation in the unfolding divine drama. Her few direct words are memorable, her actions speak of faith, and her presence at the beginning and end of Jesus’ life gives her story a symmetry of quiet devotion. She is the mother of the Messiah, but not the center of the narrative—honored not for speaking, but for listening, receiving, and remaining.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, does not appear anywhere in the Hebrew Bible. Her name is absent, her lineage is not discussed, and her role is neither foreshadowed nor prophesied in any explicit or personal terms. The Hebrew scriptures, known as the Tanakh, conclude centuries before Mary’s historical time and are shaped by different theological concerns—national covenant, prophetic warning, and messianic hope framed primarily through the lens of kings, prophets, and Israel as a collective.

While later Christian interpreters have often pointed to verses in the Hebrew Bible as veiled references to Mary—such as the young woman of Isaiah 7:14 who “shall conceive and bear a son”—these interpretations are retroactive and theological rather than literal or contextual. In the original Hebrew context, such verses refer to immediate political circumstances, symbols of divine reassurance for the house of David, not predictions of an individual virgin mother centuries later.

The Hebrew Bible includes many women of faith, including Hannah, the mother of Samuel, who prays for a child and offers a song of thanksgiving upon his birth. Her prayer in 1 Samuel 2 bears striking thematic resemblance to Mary’s Magnificat in Luke, with both hymns celebrating God’s reversal of human fortunes—the proud humbled, the lowly lifted, the hungry fed. Yet Hannah is not Mary, and her story functions within a separate prophetic and national framework.

Genealogies in the Hebrew Bible focus largely on male descent and tribal identity, especially through the lines of Judah, Levi, and David. While Christian genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke later trace his heritage through Davidic lines—suggesting his messianic qualification—these lineages refer to Joseph's ancestry, not Mary's. The Hebrew Bible, as it stands, offers no direct preparation for her role.

Mary's absence from the Hebrew Bible underscores a key distinction in the scope and content of the scriptures. The Tanakh does not anticipate her, name her, or describe her role. Her importance emerges entirely within the New Testament's historical and theological context. Any significance ascribed to her by Christians must therefore be read as a development within Christian sacred history, not as a fulfillment of literal, personal prophecy in the Hebrew scriptures.

In literal terms, Mary's story begins not in the ancient scrolls of Israel, but in the quiet villages of first-century Judea, where the Hebrew Bible's silence leaves space for a new and unexpected beginning.

In the Qur'an, Mary—Maryam in Arabic—is given a uniquely elevated status among all women, both in reverence and in narrative detail. She is the only woman mentioned by name in the entire Qur'anic text and is the subject of an entire chapter, Surah 19, titled "Maryam." Her story is told with empathy, reverence, and dignity, portraying her as a model of chastity, devotion, and endurance under divine trial. Unlike her quiet presence in the Gospels, Mary in the Qur'an is given speech, emotional depth, and public vindication.

Her story begins with divine selection. In Surah 3:42, she is addressed by angels: "O Mary, indeed Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of all worlds." She is described as a devout woman who withdraws from her people to a secluded place, where she is approached by a divine messenger in the form of a man. The encounter is dramatic and emotionally charged. Mary exclaims, "Indeed, I seek refuge in the Most Merciful from you, if you should be fearing of Allah!" (Surah 19:18) The angel reassures her that she will bear a son "as a sign to the people and a mercy from Us." (19:21)

Mary's reaction to the miraculous conception is full of human anxiety. As labor overtakes her, she retreats under a palm tree, crying out, "Oh, I wish I had died before this and was in oblivion, forgotten." (19:23) This outcry captures the immense emotional and physical toll placed upon her. But in her moment of despair, divine aid arrives. A voice calls out, comforting her, instructing her to shake the palm trunk so that dates will fall for her nourishment, and to drink from the stream provided beside her.

Upon returning to her people, carrying the infant Jesus, she faces immediate accusation. Her silence is intentional—she had been commanded not to speak. Instead, she gestures to the child. Jesus then speaks from the cradle, saying, "Indeed, I am the servant of Allah. He has given me the Scripture and made me a prophet." (19:30) This miraculous speech serves as both vindication for Mary and a declaration of the child's prophetic role.

The Qur'an exonerates Mary explicitly and strongly. Surah 66:12 describes her as a woman "who guarded her chastity, so We breathed into her through Our Spirit, and she believed in the words of her Lord and His scriptures and was of the devoutly obedient." This theological framing positions Mary as not only pure but as a believer in divine revelation, linked to the prophetic tradition and aligned with the highest moral and spiritual standards.

Mary is not only a mother but a central character in the Qur'an's spiritual landscape. Her story is embedded with signs, trials, and divine grace. She is portrayed with full moral agency —she speaks, prays, grieves, and is ultimately vindicated not through her own defense, but through the miraculous validation provided by God. This pattern reflects a broader Qur'anic theme: that divine truth transcends human accusation and that the righteous, though tested, are never abandoned.

In the Qur'anic vision, Mary stands alone—neither wife nor daughter nor extension of a male figure—given a sacred role in her own right. Her place is not secondary. She is named, remembered, and revered in scripture, not only for her motherhood but for her unwavering faith under the weight of divine purpose. Her story in the Qur'an is a narrative of testing and vindication, of solitude and divine nearness, rich in speech and filled with profound spiritual significance.

The birth of Jesus, as narrated in the Gospels and the Qur'an, presents overlapping themes—divine intervention, virgin conception, and the child's extraordinary destiny—yet each account shapes the event through its own theological lens and narrative style. The Hebrew Bible contains no direct birth narrative of Jesus or Mary and serves instead as a cultural and prophetic backdrop. In both the Gospels and the Qur'an, the birth of Jesus is a moment of divine initiative and human astonishment, but the surrounding elements, tone, and emphasis differ in key ways.

In the Gospel of Luke, the birth of Jesus is framed within Roman imperial time and Jewish expectation. The angel Gabriel visits Mary in Nazareth and announces, "You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus… He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High." (Luke 1:31–32) Mary questions, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" Gabriel responds that the Holy Spirit will come upon her and that the child will be called holy. The account emphasizes divine power and favor, and Mary responds in faith: "Let it be to me according to your word." The narrative then moves to Bethlehem, where Jesus is born in humble surroundings and laid in a manger. Angels announce the birth to shepherds, signifying peace and divine goodwill. The tone is joyful and messianic, blending cosmic significance with pastoral imagery.

Matthew's version centers on Joseph's experience. Upon discovering Mary's pregnancy, he resolves to divorce her quietly, but an angel in a dream assures him the child is from the Holy Spirit. The prophecy from Isaiah—"a virgin shall conceive and bear a son"—is quoted, connecting the birth to Hebrew scripture. The Magi from the east arrive later, guided by a star, and Herod's threat leads the family to flee to Egypt. The birth here is intertwined with fulfillment, danger, and divine protection, showing Jesus as both royal and vulnerable from the start.

In the Qur'an, the account is distinct both in sequence and tone. The Annunciation occurs when Mary has withdrawn from her people in seclusion. A spirit appears in human form and announces the birth of a son. Mary expresses her astonishment: "How can I have a boy while no man has touched me?" (Surah 19:20) The answer is simple and powerful: "It is easy for Me." (19:21) She conceives and, in solitude, endures the labor pains alone beneath a palm tree. Her anguish—"I wish I had died before this"—reflects both physical pain and fear of societal shame. Divine mercy responds with comfort: water from a stream, dates from the tree, and assurance. She is told to remain silent and point to the child.

The newborn Jesus then speaks, defending his mother and declaring, "Indeed, I am the servant of Allah. He has given me the Scripture and made me a prophet." (19:30) This miracle immediately vindicates Mary and affirms the child's sacred role. The narrative lacks Bethlehem, mangers, shepherds, or a census. Its focus is on Mary's isolation, emotional trial, and God's direct intervention. The setting is sparse, the drama internal, the tone reverent.

Key differences emerge from a literal comparison. In the Gospels, the conception is heavenly, but the birth is earthly—marked by community, journeys, threats, and public signs. In the Qur'an, the conception is also divine, but the birth is solitary, painful, and immediately miraculous. Mary in the Gospels is surrounded by family, shepherds, and wise men. In the Qur'an, she is alone, speaking only through silence and her newborn son.

The common ground lies in the virgin birth, the child's divine mission, and Mary's role as a chosen woman. Yet the contrasts reveal differing priorities. The Gospels highlight prophecy fulfilled and the arrival of a messianic king. The Qur'an emphasizes divine purity, protection from slander, and Mary's unique status as a woman of unmatched faith. Together, these narratives provide parallel windows into a birth that reshaped religious imagination—told differently, but anchored in awe and divine mystery.

Mary's portrayal in scripture—her titles, the language used to describe her, and the frequency of her mention—reveals how each tradition locates her within its theological and literary framework. Across the Gospels and the Qur'an, she is revered and respected, though the extent and manner of her exaltation differ sharply. The Hebrew Bible makes no reference to her at all, meaning her identity and titles emerge exclusively from the New Testament and Islamic scripture.

In the Gospels, Mary is typically referred to simply as "Mary," often identified in relation to others: "Mary, the mother of Jesus," or "his mother." She is called "highly favored" by the angel Gabriel in Luke 1:28, who greets her with, "Hail, favored one, the Lord is with you." Later, Elizabeth exclaims, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." (Luke 1:42) These titles—favored, blessed—convey divine approval and esteem, yet remain modest and relational. Mary's identity is largely defined by her motherhood. The term "Virgin Mary" appears through inference—her virginity is declared as a fact, not a name—but becomes a fixed title in later Christian tradition more than in the scriptural text itself.

In terms of frequency, Mary is mentioned relatively few times across the four Gospels. Her most detailed portrayal appears in Luke, where she speaks and is involved in the birth

narrative. In Matthew, she is central but passive, with Joseph taking narrative precedence. In John, she is "the mother of Jesus" and is present at two significant moments—Cana and the crucifixion—yet never called by name. The Gospel language is respectful but restrained, and there is no title akin to "Mother of God" or "Queen of Heaven" within the canonical texts themselves. Such titles arise in later ecclesiastical tradition.

The Qur'an, by contrast, names Mary explicitly—*Maryam* in Arabic—more times than the entire New Testament. She is mentioned by name twenty-four times and is the only woman to be identified by name in the Qur'an. Her literal title is given clearly and with emphasis. She is referred to as "Maryam bint ʿImrān" (Mary, daughter of Imran), and frequently as "Maryam, the mother of ʿĪsā (Jesus)." These designations highlight both her lineage and her maternal role, connecting her to a prophetic family line.

But the Qur'an goes further. It explicitly states: "And Mary, the daughter of Imran, who guarded her chastity, and We breathed into her from Our Spirit, and she believed in the words of her Lord and His scriptures and was of the devoutly obedient." (Surah 66:12) This verse ties together her purity, her spiritual elevation, and her role as a believer. The phrase "We breathed into her from Our Spirit" is used only for special divine acts and signals sacred distinction. She is also the subject of divine proclamation: "Indeed, Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of all worlds." (Surah 3:42) This title—*chosen above all women*—is the highest praise given to any woman in scripture and is stated clearly, without ambiguity.

The language used in the Qur'an to describe Mary is direct, respectful, and consistently elevated. She is described with qualities such as *ṣiddīqa* (truthful, deeply righteous), *qānitīn* (devoutly obedient), and *muḥṣana* (guarded, chaste). These descriptors go beyond her role as a mother and define her as a person of exemplary spiritual stature in her own right.

While Christian scripture portrays Mary as humble and faithful, largely in support of Jesus' mission, the Qur'an presents her as an independent figure whose character is praised in its own theological terms. The contrast is not one of contradiction but of emphasis. The Gospels are focused on the life and mission of Jesus, with Mary as an integral but supporting character. The Qur'an, while also focusing on Jesus, places considerable narrative and moral attention on Mary's experience, speech, and vindication.

Thus, in literal terms, Mary is portrayed in the Gospels with quiet reverence and relational identity, while in the Qur'an she is named, titled, and praised with theological clarity and repeated emphasis. She is not only the mother of a prophet but also a woman of her own divine selection—named, defended, and memorialized in scripture.

Satan, Sin, and Human Accountability

In the book of Genesis, the origin of sin and human disobedience is introduced through the enigmatic figure of the serpent, whose presence in the Garden of Eden triggers the pivotal act

of defiance that alters the human-divine relationship. The serpent, described as "more cunning than any beast of the field" (Genesis 3:1), initiates the conversation that leads Eve—and subsequently Adam—into eating the forbidden fruit. This narrative, though concise, establishes the foundational link between deception, disobedience, and moral consequence in the Hebrew Bible.

The serpent's approach is subtle and suggestive. He does not issue a command but raises a question: "Did God really say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" This rhetorical framing plants doubt and reframes the divine prohibition as a point of contention. When Eve replies that only the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden is forbidden, lest they die, the serpent counters with a direct denial: "You will not surely die." He then proposes an alternative motive behind God's command: "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:4–5)

This moment shifts the focus from obedience to autonomy. The serpent's words appeal to desire, knowledge, and self-elevation. The text emphasizes the perceptual and emotional response: "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes… she took of its fruit and ate." Adam, who is with her, eats as well. Notably, the serpent does not coerce or force—his power lies in persuasion, suggesting a more psychological form of temptation rooted in human will.

The immediate aftermath is one of awareness and shame. Their eyes are opened, and they perceive their nakedness, sewing fig leaves together to cover themselves. When they hear God walking in the garden, they hide. God's interrogation—"Where are you?"—reveals the breach in trust. Adam blames Eve, Eve blames the serpent, and the pattern of deflection begins. Yet God holds each accountable, issuing distinct consequences: the serpent is cursed to crawl and eat dust, the woman to suffer in childbirth and desire relational tension, and the man to toil for survival from a cursed ground.

Importantly, Genesis does not identify the serpent explicitly as Satan. The Hebrew word *nahash* means serpent or snake, and while later Jewish and Christian interpretations connect the figure to Satan, the text itself presents the serpent as a clever creature, whose actions provoke divine judgment. The association of the serpent with cosmic evil develops more fully in post-biblical literature and the New Testament.

In this primal episode, sin enters through suggestion, not compulsion. The disobedience is voluntary, and the consequences immediate: alienation from God, the introduction of suffering, and eventual exile from Eden. The narrative underscores moral agency—humans choose, respond, and bear responsibility. The serpent acts as a catalyst, but the fall belongs to those who reached for what was forbidden, believing it would elevate them. The stage is thus set for a continuing exploration of sin, accountability, and redemption that will echo across scriptures.

In the writings of Paul, particularly in the Epistle to the Romans, Adam is elevated from a primordial figure in human origin to a theological symbol of sin's entry into the world. Paul interprets Adam's disobedience not only as a historical act but as a cosmic turning point—an

act whose consequences cascade through all humanity. His reflections in Romans 5 provide the foundational Christian understanding of original sin and collective human fallenness, shaping centuries of doctrinal thought.

Paul writes, “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned...” (Romans 5:12). Here, Adam becomes the archetype of fallen humanity. Sin is not merely an individual act of transgression but a condition inherited through lineage, binding all people to mortality and moral estrangement. Paul views Adam as the conduit through which both sin and death became universal realities. His single act—eating the forbidden fruit—has ramifications beyond the garden, entangling all of humanity in its consequences.

This theological interpretation is not found in Genesis itself, which presents Adam and Eve’s disobedience as initiating their own punishment—death, labor, and exile—but without asserting a doctrine of inherited guilt. Paul, however, extrapolates from the Genesis narrative a profound metaphysical reality: the human condition is marked from the start by sin, and no one is exempt.

Yet Paul does not leave the story there. His focus quickly turns to contrast Adam with Christ. “For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.” (Romans 5:19) Adam and Christ become representative figures: the first Adam brings sin and death, the second Adam—Christ—brings grace and life. Through Adam came the fall; through Christ, the reversal. This theological pairing is central to Paul’s message: humanity’s descent into sin is not the final word, because a new path to redemption has been opened.

The concept of original sin, later formalized by Augustine and others, has its roots in Paul’s letters. It implies not only that all people sin, but that they are born into a state of separation from God due to Adam’s act. Paul does not provide detailed explanation about how this sin is transmitted—whether biologically, spiritually, or symbolically—but he is clear about its consequence: universal death and moral incapacity without divine intervention.

Paul’s theological vision frames Adam not merely as a historical figure but as a gateway. Through his act, sin enters; through Christ, grace abounds. Satan, while present in Pauline thought, is not the central figure in this particular argument. Instead, human agency—through Adam—and divine rescue—through Christ—form the essential structure. The problem of sin is not just what people do, but what they are part of, and the solution lies in being spiritually reborn into the righteousness of Christ rather than remaining bound to the legacy of the first man.

Thus, for Paul, Adam is not simply the first sinner—he is the doorway through which sin and death gained access to all, a doorway that only Christ, in obedience, can close. This framing redefines sin as both a personal and inherited condition, requiring not just repentance but transformation through divine grace.

In the Qur'an, the narrative of sin, temptation, and human responsibility is cast in fundamentally different terms from the Christian concept of original sin. Adam's disobedience does occur, and Satan plays a tempting role, but the implications of the event are contained within the individual lives of Adam and his spouse. There is no inherited guilt, no theological fall from grace, and no rupture that transmits moral corruption to future generations. Instead, sin is personal, accountability is direct, and divine mercy is immediate.

The Qur'anic account of Adam and Satan unfolds across several chapters, including Surah 2 (al-Baqarah), Surah 7 (al-A'raf), Surah 15 (al-Hijr), and Surah 20 (Ta-Ha). In these retellings, Satan—referred to as Iblis—refuses to prostrate to Adam when commanded by God. His refusal, rooted in pride ("I am better than him, You created me from fire and him from clay," Surah 7:12), leads to his expulsion from divine favor. Iblis then vows to mislead humanity, saying, "Because You have put me in error, I will surely sit in wait for them on Your straight path." (7:16)

Adam and his wife are warned not to approach a certain tree in Paradise, yet they succumb to the suggestion of Satan. In the Qur'an, Satan does not present a lie in the same form as in Genesis, but he whispers to them, promising eternal life and an everlasting kingdom. The word *waswasa* is used—meaning to whisper—a term that implies subtle, internal suggestion rather than overt deception or coercion. The Qur'an does not depict Satan as a talking serpent or animal, but rather as a being who whispers into the hearts.

Once Adam and his wife eat from the tree, their nakedness becomes apparent, and they begin to cover themselves with leaves. However, the Qur'an does not describe this act as introducing a permanent, inherited sin nature. Instead, it emphasizes repentance and forgiveness: "Then Adam received from his Lord words, and He accepted his repentance. Indeed, He is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful." (Surah 2:37) The focus is not on guilt, but on recovery. God does not curse Adam, his spouse, or the earth. There is no suggestion that their act has corrupted human nature or altered divine-human relations permanently.

The departure from Paradise is presented as part of divine will rather than punishment alone. "Descend from it, all of you. And when guidance comes to you from Me, whoever follows My guidance—there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve." (2:38) This shift is not described as a fall, but a transition. Humanity moves from a paradisiacal state to an earthly one, now guided by revelation and responsible for moral choice.

In the Qur'anic view, Satan's role is that of a deceiver and whisperer—never a rival to God, and never with the power to compel. His influence is real, but limited to suggestion. Humans are fully accountable for their choices. Every soul bears its own burden, and none shall bear the burden of another. (Surah 6:164) There is no doctrine of inherited sin or collective guilt. Sin is not a stain passed through generations, but a test faced by each individual.

This theological framing reinforces key Islamic principles: the oneness of God, the justice of personal accountability, and the accessibility of divine forgiveness. Adam's story in the Qur'an is one of human frailty, divine compassion, and the importance of sincere repentance.

Far from introducing an irreversible fall, it illustrates that even the first prophet erred—and was forgiven—not because of intercession, but because of direct supplication and God's mercy.

Thus, in the Qur'an, sin begins with whispered temptation, not rebellion; it results in earthly life, not exile; and it is resolved by repentance, not redemption through sacrifice. The narrative keeps moral responsibility on the individual level, emphasizing that the door to mercy remains open, unblocked by inherited fault or ancestral sin.

In the Qur'anic worldview, sin is neither transmitted through lineage nor inherited through ancestry. Each human being is born in a state of purity—what Islamic theology refers to as *fitrah*, a natural disposition inclined toward awareness of God. This foundational view stands in deliberate contrast to the Christian doctrine of original sin, where the guilt of Adam is believed to affect all humanity. The Qur'an, by contrast, insists on individual accountability and moral autonomy, portraying life as a personal test in which each soul bears its own burden.

This principle is stated repeatedly and unequivocally in the Qur'an. One of the clearest verses reads: "No bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another." (Surah 6:164; also echoed in 17:15 and 35:18) This theological axiom rules out any notion that the sin of Adam—or of any ancestor—can attach itself to a descendant. Human beings are not born fallen, but rather are endowed with reason, moral intuition, and the capacity for both error and repentance. The consequences of Adam's disobedience are not legally or spiritually inherited. While Adam and his wife disobeyed, they also repented and were forgiven. Their story serves as a precedent not for inherited guilt, but for the possibility of divine mercy after personal failure.

The Qur'an characterizes life on earth as a deliberate testing ground: "He created death and life to test you as to which of you is best in deed." (Surah 67:2) This test applies to each individual, regardless of lineage or community. Prophets are sent as guides, not as mediators of inherited sin. They are examples of righteous conduct and bear messages for their people, but they do not carry or remove the guilt of others.

The story of Adam and his wife reinforces this emphasis. After their mistake, God teaches them how to seek forgiveness. "Then Adam received from his Lord words, and He accepted his repentance." (Surah 2:37) This moment is not framed as the loss of human innocence but as the beginning of moral consciousness. Humanity's departure from Paradise is not presented as divine wrath but as a necessary transition into a world where moral freedom can be tested and spiritual growth can occur.

Moreover, the Qur'anic concept of divine justice is tightly linked to this framework. It would be unjust for a person to suffer for another's sin, and God, as repeatedly described in the Qur'an, is not unjust to His servants. Even within families, spiritual responsibility is personal. Noah's son, though biologically connected to a prophet, is not spared in the flood because "he is not of your family; his conduct is unrighteous." (Surah 11:46) This verse underscores that divine criteria are based on personal behavior, not inherited status.

In sum, the Qur'an presents sin as a matter of individual choice, not collective legacy. There is no fall from grace that defines humanity's relationship to God, and no guilt that is carried across generations. Each person begins life with a clean record, equipped with reason, conscience, and access to divine guidance. It is through their own decisions that they either draw near to God or turn away, and it is through their own repentance that they can seek and receive forgiveness. The human journey is not one of inherited estrangement but of personal opportunity—and the test of each soul is its own to face.

When read literally, the three scriptural traditions present distinct portrayals of Satan's identity and human nature—differences that reflect contrasting theological foundations. These differences appear not only in the tone and scope of each narrative but in the very vocabulary and roles assigned to Satan and humanity. The divergence is especially sharp between the Qur'an and the Christian New Testament, with the Hebrew Bible offering a more restrained, ambiguous figure.

In Genesis, the tempter is the serpent—*nahash* in Hebrew—a cunning creature who leads humans into disobedience but is never explicitly named Satan. The serpent is punished for its role and cursed to crawl on its belly, but its identity remains zoological rather than demonic. The Hebrew Bible introduces the figure of *ha-satan* later, in books like Job and Zechariah, where he appears as an adversary or accuser within the divine court, not as a cosmic enemy of God. This early depiction casts Satan as a tester of faith rather than an embodiment of evil. Human nature in this context is capable of disobedience, yet is not inherently corrupted. People can repent, and many biblical figures sin and are restored without any doctrinal weight of inherited guilt.

In the New Testament, Satan's identity becomes more sharply defined. He is the deceiver, the tempter in the wilderness, the accuser, and "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4). In Revelation, he is explicitly equated with the serpent: "that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan" (Revelation 12:9). Here, Satan becomes the adversary not only of humans but of God's entire salvific plan. He tempts Jesus, sows evil, and is destined for final destruction. Human nature, in Pauline theology, is described as fallen, captive to sin, and in need of redemption. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), and "through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin" (Romans 5:12). This framework presents human beings as born into a state of moral brokenness from which they cannot escape without divine grace, a view intrinsically tied to a literal, inherited impact of Adam's transgression.

In the Qur'an, Satan—called Iblis—is not a fallen angel but a jinn, a creature made of smokeless fire who disobeyed God's command to bow to Adam. He is cast out not for challenging God's sovereignty but for arrogance and disobedience. Iblis is not the equal of God, nor is he part of a dualistic struggle. He merely whispers to humans, planting suggestions (*waswasa*), but has no authority to compel. "Indeed, My servants—you have no authority over them," God says (Surah 15:42). Satan's role is as a tempter, a deceiver whose power lies only in influencing the weak-hearted. His identity is defined through behavior—pride, envy, rebellion—not through ontological evil.

Human nature in the Qur'an is created with dignity and potential. "We have certainly created man in the best of stature" (Surah 95:4). Humans are forgetful and prone to error, but they are also capable of repentance, guided by divine messages, and accountable for their own choices. They are not born sinful, nor are they trapped by a fall. Their moral state is dynamic, not fixed by birth. Sin is a deviation, not an inheritance. Every soul is judged by its own deeds, and repentance is always available without intermediaries.

Thus, the literal divergence is clear. In the Hebrew Bible, Satan is vague and procedural, and human nature is mixed but untainted. In the New Testament, Satan is personalized and powerful, while humanity is stained by original sin. In the Qur'an, Satan is a whispering jinn with limited power, and human beings are accountable individuals born in purity, not guilt. These differences are not merely theological—they are embedded in the grammar, character roles, and narrative focus of the texts themselves. Satan's identity and human nature, viewed literally, anchor each tradition's unique conception of sin, freedom, and the path to redemption.

The Last Day and Judgment

The prophetic texts of Daniel in the Hebrew Bible and Revelation in the New Testament offer some of the most vivid and symbolic depictions of the Last Day and divine judgment found in the scriptural canon. Both books, though separated by centuries and covenantal contexts, describe apocalyptic visions where time culminates in resurrection, judgment, and the ultimate division of the righteous and the wicked. These texts do not merely offer predictions —they construct theological architecture around the concepts of final justice, cosmic authority, and divine sovereignty.

In the book of Daniel, the vision of the end is anchored in a prophetic dream sequence that unfolds in the latter chapters. Daniel 12:2–3 presents a foundational resurrection motif: "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." This dual resurrection, though not elaborated with vivid detail, introduces the idea that the dead will rise for judgment. The righteous are described as shining "like the brightness of the sky," suggesting that reward is not only spiritual but also radiant and enduring. The judgment throne itself is not depicted in these verses, but the broader vision in Daniel 7 introduces a celestial court: "The Ancient of Days took His seat… thousands upon thousands attended Him, and the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened." (Daniel 7:9–10)

This imagery sets the tone for divine justice as a formal process, governed by a heavenly assembly. The "Son of Man" figure in Daniel 7:13–14, who is given dominion and glory, becomes central to later Christian interpretations of messianic judgment. The emphasis in Daniel is not only on justice, but on the revelation of what is hidden—the lifting of veils, the exposure of truth, and the eventual righting of cosmic wrongs.

The book of Revelation builds on and expands this apocalyptic framework, using rich and often cryptic symbolism to describe the final judgment. Revelation 20:11–15 presents the central courtroom scene: “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who was seated on it… and the dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.” The sea gives up its dead, and Death and Hades themselves are emptied and cast into the lake of fire. The “Book of Life” appears as the register of salvation, and anyone whose name is not found in it is thrown into the fire.

Revelation’s vision of judgment is more intense, more visual, and more final than Daniel’s. The throne is described with grandeur, the setting cosmic, and the outcome absolute. While Daniel’s resurrection is described in general terms of reward and contempt, Revelation focuses on eternal destinies and divine separation: “Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection… over such the second death has no power.” (Revelation 20:6)

Both texts describe a final day when divine justice will manifest in its fullness, but they differ in tone and detail. Daniel emphasizes the unveiling of God’s plan through wisdom and endurance during oppressive times, while Revelation focuses on triumph through the Lamb, the defeat of evil empires, and the renewal of creation. Yet both affirm resurrection, judgment, and a divine throne before which all must appear.

Together, these visions establish the premise that human history is not circular or aimless but directed toward a climactic moment of reckoning. The throne, the books, the resurrection—all function as literary and theological devices to underscore a final truth: every life will be brought before the divine seat of justice, and no deed will remain hidden. The Last Day, as seen in Daniel and Revelation, is not merely the end—it is the culmination of divine order restored.

In the teachings of Jesus, the theme of final judgment is recurrent and central. Rather than systematic theological exposition, Jesus presents the Last Day through parables, analogies, and vivid moral imagery. His words often frame the coming judgment in relational and ethical terms—highlighting not merely belief or identity, but the lived expression of mercy, justice, and humility. Among the most direct of his teachings is the parable of the sheep and the goats, found in the Gospel of Matthew, which outlines the criteria by which humanity will be divided and judged.

In Matthew 25:31–46, Jesus describes a scene of cosmic clarity. “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory.” All nations are gathered before him, and he separates people as a shepherd separates sheep from goats. The sheep are placed at his right hand, the goats at his left. This division is not based on religious affiliation, temple practice, or declared allegiance, but on acts of compassion: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, caring for the sick, and visiting the imprisoned.

To those on the right, the King says, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Their reward is eternal, and their righteousness is revealed not in ritual but in their response to the needs of “the least of

these." When the righteous ask, "When did we see you hungry or thirsty?" the answer comes: "Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me." This identification of moral action with divine service becomes the key principle of judgment.

Conversely, those on the left—the goats—are condemned for their failure to act with compassion. Their omission, not their commission, brings judgment. "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." The starkness of the outcome reveals the seriousness with which Jesus presents judgment: not merely a future reckoning, but a real and eternal separation based on what was done—or left undone.

Other parables reinforce this theme. In the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1–13), preparedness is emphasized. Only those who have kept their lamps ready for the bridegroom are welcomed into the feast. The others, though late, find the door shut. "Truly, I say to you, I do not know you." The parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14–30) warns against spiritual passivity. Those who invest their gifts are rewarded, but the one who hides his talent out of fear is condemned as wicked and lazy. Each parable ends with a consequence—entry into joy or exclusion into darkness—highlighting that the judgment will be both individual and absolute.

Jesus' teaching on judgment is deeply moral, rooted in everyday acts that reveal inward spiritual truths. There is no complex liturgy or legal system invoked—only the fruits of love, justice, and readiness. The judge is the Son of Man, but he appears not as a distant monarch, but as one who identifies himself with the poor, the hungry, and the forgotten. The judgment, therefore, is not arbitrary but reflective. It reveals what was already true of the heart, made visible through action or neglect.

In Jesus' view, the Last Day is not just a doctrine to be believed but a call to radical ethical living. The separation of sheep and goats, the opened or shut doors, the returns or losses of investment—these are not abstract theological puzzles but moral stories with eternal consequences. His words make judgment both near and personal: it is not merely coming—it is already being prepared in every moment of human response to the needs of others.

The Qur'an presents the Last Day, or *Yawm al-Qiyāmah*, as an inevitable and all-encompassing event in which every soul will be judged according to its deeds. This judgment is portrayed with vivid imagery, deliberate structure, and moral clarity. The process involves the resurrection of all beings, the unveiling of past actions, and the precise weighing of each individual's record. Unlike symbolic parables, the Qur'an emphasizes literal accountability, divine justice, and eternal consequences—reward for the righteous, conscious punishment for the wicked.

One of the defining features of Qur'anic eschatology is the *Mīzān*, or scale, used to weigh human deeds. In Surah 7:8–9, it is declared, "The weighing on that Day will be the truth. So those whose scales are heavy—it is they who will be the successful. But those whose scales are light—those are the ones who have lost their souls because they used to wrong Our

signs." Deeds are not viewed metaphorically; they are quantified and assessed with divine precision. The scales reflect a moral measurement rooted in sincerity, action, and intention.

The record of deeds, or *Kitāb*, is also central to this vision. Every person will be given a book of their actions—either in their right hand, as a sign of salvation, or in their left, indicating doom. "Read your record. Sufficient is yourself against you this Day as accountant." (Surah 17:14) No deed, however small, is omitted: "So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it." (Surah 99:7–8) This principle reinforces a radical moral realism—each individual is fully responsible, and nothing escapes the divine tally.

The Qur'an's depiction of Hell—*Jahannam*—is explicit and sensory. It is described as a place of scorching fire, boiling water, and relentless anguish. Yet it is not simply a location; it is a conscious state. The damned are not destroyed but made to endure their punishment with awareness: "They will wish to get out of the Fire, but never will they get out therefrom; and theirs will be a lasting torment." (Surah 5:37) The torment is not arbitrary but corresponds to the moral rejection that defined their earthly lives. Those who mocked revelation, oppressed others, or turned away from divine truth find their consequences literalized in the afterlife.

The psychological and spiritual dimensions of Hell are also emphasized. In Surah 67:10–11, the condemned acknowledge their guilt: "If we had only listened or reasoned, we would not be among the companions of the Blaze." This regret, awareness, and inability to reverse fate deepen the horror—not just fire, but conscious failure and unrelieved realization.

Yet the Qur'an does not frame this reality as divine cruelty. God's justice is paired with mercy, and every opportunity is given for repentance. "And My mercy encompasses all things." (Surah 7:156) The judgment is exact and impartial, "not wronging anyone even as much as the thread of a date seed." (Surah 4:49) Those who repented, believed, and did righteous deeds are promised Paradise—*Jannah*—described with equal vividness as a place of gardens, rivers, peace, and nearness to God.

The Qur'anic judgment is thus not random but rooted in justice, forewarned by prophets, and fully deserved by each individual based on the balance of their life's deeds. The imagery of scales, books, fire, and paradise serves not only as literary symbolism but as doctrinal affirmations of a world where divine accountability reigns. Every act, word, and intention counts—and on the Last Day, all of it will be revealed, weighed, and answered for.

The scriptural portrayals of the afterlife, when read literally, offer distinct geographies of eternity—realms that reflect divine justice and cosmic separation. While each tradition uses metaphor and vision to describe what lies beyond death, a literal reading of their texts reveals structured, spatial depictions of both reward and punishment, each with its own imagery, directionality, and boundaries.

In the Hebrew Bible, the afterlife is sparsely detailed and generally centered around *Sheol*—a shadowy, subterranean realm of the dead. Sheol is described not as a place of torment or bliss, but as a neutral space where all the dead reside, righteous and wicked alike. In texts like

Ecclesiastes and Job, it is the "land of gloom and deep shadow," where there is no remembrance or praise of God. The geography is downward—beneath the earth—and undifferentiated. Only in later Jewish apocalyptic literature does Sheol begin to be morally divided, hinting at resurrection and judgment, as seen in Daniel 12, where some rise to everlasting life and others to shame. But even here, the vision remains brief and symbolic, lacking detailed maps of heaven or hell.

In the New Testament, particularly in the teachings of Jesus and the book of Revelation, the geography of the afterlife becomes more defined. Heaven is often referred to as the "Kingdom of God" or the "Father's house," a place of reward, rest, and communion with the divine. Jesus speaks of many rooms prepared for the righteous (John 14:2) and of the righteous shining like the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matthew 13:43). Heaven is generally described as above, with ascending imagery—either to a throne, a city, or the eternal presence of God.

Hell, conversely, is cast as *Gehenna*—a term derived from the Valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem, historically associated with idolatry and child sacrifice. Jesus uses Gehenna as the archetype of final punishment: "where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched." (Mark 9:48) It is portrayed as a place of "outer darkness," where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. In Revelation, this geography intensifies. The wicked are cast into the "lake of fire," along with death, Hades, and the devil (Revelation 20:14–15). The final city of God, the New Jerusalem, is described in precise architectural terms: golden streets, twelve gates, foundations named after apostles, and a river of life flowing from God's throne. The physicality of the city is emphasized, suggesting a restored, embodied world for the redeemed.

The Qur'an offers the most literal and geographically structured vision of the afterlife. Paradise (*Jannah*) and Hell (*Jahannam*) are not abstract realms but richly imagined locations with detailed characteristics. Paradise is described as a multi-tiered garden world, with flowing rivers, shade, reclining couches, fruits, spouses, and perpetual youth. Surah 47:15 likens it to a garden with rivers of water, milk, wine, and honey. The righteous are said to enter through specific gates, dwell in lofty pavilions, and enjoy peace and greetings from God. Paradise lies above, often referred to with the verb *rafaʿa*—to raise or elevate.

Hell, in contrast, is located downward and layered. It has gates, guards, and different levels of punishment, each reserved for categories of deniers and sinners. The geography includes blazing fire, boiling water, scorching wind, chains, and Zaqqum—a cursed tree with fruits like devils' heads. Surah 15:44 states that Hell has seven gates, each assigned to a specific group. The descriptions are not merely metaphorical but are intended to convey real, conscious experiences of torment or bliss, tailored precisely to each soul's record.

Literal directionality also plays a role in Islamic and Christian texts. The righteous "enter" Paradise, while the wicked are "cast" into Hell. Books are opened, thrones are established, and people are gathered in a plain or valley for judgment. The Qur'an mentions a "barrier" (*ḥijāb*) and a "wall" (*al-Aʿrāf*) between Paradise and Hell, with people standing upon it, observing both realms.

Taken together, the scriptures offer spatially organized visions of the afterlife: a high city or garden of reward, a low or burning pit of punishment, and a central point of judgment where human destiny is irrevocably assigned. These geographies are more than poetic—they reflect each tradition's understanding of divine justice, eternal separation, and the final shape of moral reality.

The concept of divine mercy and the possibility of intercession occupy different places within the eschatologies of the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Qur'an. Each tradition presents a unique balance between divine justice and mercy, and each frames the question of intercession—whether anyone can plead on behalf of another—through its own theological lens. A literal reading of the texts reveals both where mercy is offered directly and where intercession is either granted, conditional, or entirely denied.

In the Hebrew Bible, the Last Day is not described in unified terms, and neither mercy nor intercession is systematically defined in eschatological context. Yet throughout the Hebrew scriptures, God is frequently characterized as "gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love." While texts such as Micah 7:18 proclaim that God "does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy," this mercy is extended directly from God to the individual or the nation. Intercession is present in earlier narratives—Abraham pleading for Sodom, Moses pleading for Israel—but these episodes pertain to earthly judgment, not final judgment after death. The idea of someone interceding after resurrection or on the Day of Judgment does not appear explicitly. Instead, repentance, humility, and return to God are the avenues through which mercy is received.

In the New Testament, mercy is central and personified in the figure of Jesus, who is portrayed both as judge and as intercessor. In texts such as Hebrews 7:25, Jesus is said to "always live to make intercession for them." His role as mediator is emphasized—"there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). This mediation is not presented as optional but essential: salvation comes through Christ's atoning death and continued intercession. At the final judgment, mercy is extended to those who belong to him, often through faith and relationship rather than strictly through deeds. The parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15) encapsulates this: the father runs to embrace the repentant son, offering mercy before any payment or punishment. Still, this mercy does not erase judgment entirely. Those who reject Christ or fail to live mercifully are warned of exclusion, with parables ending in separation and outer darkness.

In the Qur'an, mercy is emphasized with intensity and frequency. God's most repeated attributes are "the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful" (*ar-Rahmān ar-Rahīm*), opening nearly every chapter. Yet, the mechanism of mercy operates under strict divine control. Intercession (*shafāʿah*) is explicitly addressed and is only allowed by God's permission. "Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission?" (Surah 2:255) This principle is repeated in Surah 10:3 and 20:109, where intercession is granted only to those whom God approves. The Qur'an categorically denies any automatic or unauthorized intercession: "And fear a Day when no soul will suffice for another at all, nor will intercession be accepted from it." (2:48)

Unlike the Christian idea of a guaranteed mediator, the Qur'an insists that intercession is not a right but a possible grace, subject entirely to divine discretion.

Mercy in the Qur'an is linked closely to repentance and righteousness. God forgives whom He wills and guides those who seek Him. Surah 39:53 is often cited as a pinnacle of divine mercy: "Say, 'O My servants who have transgressed against themselves, do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins.'" This mercy is available directly, without intermediaries, and no soul bears the burden of another. While prophetic intercession is hinted at, it remains secondary to God's justice and permission. The Day of Judgment is one of truth, where nothing escapes the divine record, but the gate of mercy is never closed for those who sincerely repent.

In summary, mercy is prominent in all three traditions, but its mechanics differ. The Hebrew Bible presents it as a divine attribute, activated through repentance, with no eschatological intercessor. The New Testament centers mercy in Jesus, who serves as both judge and intercessor. The Qur'an emphasizes divine mercy above all but places strict boundaries around intercession, making it possible but not assured, and never independent of God's will. In each, the final judgment is not without hope, but that hope is framed by each tradition's understanding of divine mercy—whether directly accessible, mediated, or conditionally granted.

Rituals and Worship

In the Torah, the structure of religious life is deeply ritualistic, anchored in a divinely ordained system of sacrifices, a hereditary priesthood, and a calendar of sacred festivals. Worship in the Hebrew Bible is not a matter of spontaneous devotion or personal sentiment alone; it is an ordered, communal, and physical act, regulated by detailed laws and carried out in designated sacred spaces. These rituals are not peripheral—they are central to the covenant between God and Israel, serving as the visible expressions of obedience, repentance, and thanksgiving.

At the heart of this system lies the institution of sacrifice. The book of Leviticus offers an extensive manual for offerings: burnt offerings, sin offerings, guilt offerings, peace offerings, and grain offerings. Each type has a specific purpose—atonement, purification, celebration, or dedication. The animal to be sacrificed must be without blemish, symbolizing purity, and the act of laying hands upon the animal signifies identification with it. Blood, as life, is central: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls" (Leviticus 17:11). This theology of blood atonement weaves throughout the sacrificial system, underscoring the gravity of sin and the cost of reconciliation.

The priesthood, established through Aaron and his descendants, functions as the sacred mediating class. Priests are responsible for performing the sacrifices, maintaining the sanctity of the tabernacle (and later the Temple), diagnosing ritual impurity, and instructing the

people in the law. The High Priest occupies a unique role, particularly on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), when he enters the Holy of Holies to offer blood on behalf of the nation (Leviticus 16). This hierarchical structure reinforces the separation between the holy and the common, the clean and the unclean, the divine and the human.

Ritual worship is not limited to individual acts but is deeply communal, structured around a sacred calendar. The festivals—Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot), the Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah), the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), and the Feast of Booths (Sukkot)—mark historical and agricultural events with collective acts of worship and remembrance. These appointed times are "holy convocations," occasions when Israel gathers not only to celebrate but to re-affirm its identity as a people in covenant with God.

Even daily and weekly rituals carry spiritual significance. The Sabbath, observed every seventh day, is not merely a day of rest but a sign of the covenant itself. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy… For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth… and rested on the seventh day" (Exodus 20:8–11). This pattern of time mirrors creation and establishes a rhythm of worship, rest, and renewal.

Literal readings of these texts reveal a worship system that is not symbolic alone—it is practical, detailed, and sensory. Fire, incense, blood, oil, water, garments, and food—all are part of the worship vocabulary. Ritual in the Torah is a physical theology, where holiness is approached through precise actions. It is in these sacrifices and seasons that Israel remembers its deliverance, seeks forgiveness, and expresses devotion—not merely in thought, but in blood, fire, and time.

In Christianity, ritual practice undergoes a profound transformation from the detailed sacrificial system of the Torah. While the early Jesus movement emerged from Jewish ritual life, its focus shifted dramatically to inward faith, symbolic ordinances, and the body of believers as a new form of sacred space. Worship is reoriented from altar and priesthood to person and presence, centered on the figure of Jesus as both fulfillment and replacement of earlier rites. The two principal rituals that emerge—baptism and communion—serve as visible signs of spiritual realities, rich in meaning and embedded in Christian identity.

Baptism, established by Jesus and practiced from the earliest days of the church, represents spiritual cleansing, rebirth, and incorporation into the community of faith. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commands his disciples to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Baptism is not merely a washing; it is a public identification with the death and resurrection of Christ. Paul describes it this way: "We were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead… we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). Whether by immersion or sprinkling, the act marks a transformation of status—from outsider to member of the body of Christ.

Communion, also known as the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist, is the central rite of Christian worship. Instituted at the Last Supper, it memorializes Jesus' sacrificial death. "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me… This cup is the new covenant in my

blood" (1 Corinthians 11:24–25). The elements of bread and wine symbolize Jesus' body and blood, and the act becomes a re-enactment of the covenant, a moment of unity, repentance, and thanksgiving. The rite varies in frequency and interpretation across Christian denominations, but it consistently remains the touchstone of Christian liturgical life—an encounter with divine grace through simple, symbolic means.

Beyond these two sacraments, early Christianity introduced a new concept of sacred space. No longer centered on the Temple in Jerusalem, worship was now framed around the "spiritual temple" of the community itself. "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16). This idea redefined holiness: it was no longer confined to a geographical or architectural site but was manifest wherever believers gathered in Christ's name. The body of Christ—both literal and metaphorical—became the center of worship, replacing physical sacrifice with living devotion.

Rituals in Christianity therefore function less as prescribed procedures and more as participatory expressions of a transformed life. There are no longer priests offering animals at an altar; instead, believers are called a "royal priesthood," offering themselves as "living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God" (Romans 12:1). The language of sacrifice is retained, but its target has shifted from ritual to moral and spiritual obedience.

Festivals and calendar observances such as Easter and Christmas later developed within the church, rooted in remembrance of Jesus' death and birth, but these are not commanded in scripture as the Torah festivals are. They serve more as communal celebrations than covenantal requirements.

Thus, Christian ritual life is defined by inward meaning carried in outward form—baptism and communion as sacraments, the community as temple, and the believer's life as the new offering. The focus is relational, reflective, and responsive, moving from the physical altar to the heart made holy by grace.

The Qur'an presents a framework of worship that is structured, communal, and deeply personal, built upon prescribed acts of devotion known collectively as the pillars of Islam. These rituals—daily prayer (ṣalāh), fasting during Ramadan (ṣawm), almsgiving (zakāt), and pilgrimage to Mecca (ḥajj)—are not merely symbolic; they are commanded practices, rooted in divine instruction and integral to the spiritual and social life of the believer. Unlike the Christian sacraments or the priestly sacrifices of the Torah, the Qur'anic rituals are accessible to all individuals, performed without mediation and centered on direct accountability before God.

Daily prayer, ṣalāh, is the most recurrent act of worship in the Qur'an. Believers are instructed to establish prayer at fixed times throughout the day, turning physically toward the Kaʿbah in Mecca. "Indeed, prayer has been decreed upon the believers a decree of specified times" (Surah 4:103). The act involves physical postures—standing, bowing, prostrating—and Qur'anic recitation, creating a rhythm of worship that unites body, speech, and heart. Prayer is a literal conversation with God and a means of spiritual purification: "Establish prayer. Indeed, prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing" (Surah 29:45). While

communal Friday prayer is emphasized, each believer is responsible for performing their daily prayers consistently and correctly.

Fasting during the month of Ramadan, ṣawm, is another act deeply rooted in the Qur'an. "O you who have believed, fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may become mindful" (Surah 2:183). From dawn until sunset, Muslims refrain from food, drink, and marital relations, focusing instead on discipline, reflection, and generosity. Fasting is both a spiritual and physical purification, symbolizing restraint and empathy with the poor. The Qur'an emphasizes the purpose behind the act—to develop *taqwā*, or God-consciousness—and permits exemptions for those who are ill or traveling, with alternatives provided. The fast is broken each evening and culminates in the festival of Eid al-Fitr.

Zakāt, or obligatory almsgiving, is a social act of worship embedded in economic justice. The Qur'an repeatedly links prayer and zakāt: "Establish prayer and give zakāt" (Surah 2:110). It is not a voluntary donation but a fixed percentage of one's surplus wealth, distributed to categories such as the poor, the needy, and those in debt. "Zakah expenditures are only for the poor and for the needy and for those employed to collect it…" (Surah 9:60). This system creates a cycle of care, redistributes wealth, and binds spiritual obligation to social responsibility.

The pilgrimage to Mecca, ḥajj, is the most physically demanding and globally unifying ritual, required once in a lifetime for those able to perform it. The Qur'an commands: "And [due] to Allah from the people is a pilgrimage to the House—for whoever is able to find thereto a way" (Surah 3:97). The rites include circumambulating the Kaʿbah, standing at Arafat, and reenacting the journey of Hagar in search of water. These acts are not arbitrary; they embody submission, remembrance, and reenactment of prophetic legacy. The pilgrimage levels all distinctions—wealth, status, ethnicity—as millions of believers stand dressed alike before their Creator.

These core rituals, outlined in the Qur'an, are concrete expressions of servitude and structure a Muslim's life in both private and public domains. There are no ordained priests or sacrificial altars. Worship is direct, prescribed, and accessible. These acts are not mere customs; they are commands, and their performance reflects both inward intention and outward obedience. The Qur'an positions these rituals not as symbolic gestures, but as real-time enactments of faith, responsibility, and divine remembrance—each one a step in drawing closer to God.

Across the three Abrahamic traditions, the literal actions required in worship—whether through offerings, sacraments, or daily rituals—serve as more than formal obedience. They are tangible expressions of inner devotion, vehicles of moral formation, and bridges between the material and the spiritual. When examined through a literal lens, the acts themselves—slaughtering an animal, immersing in water, bowing in prayer—carry weight as commanded deeds. Yet, each tradition also embeds spiritual meaning within these gestures, creating layers of intention, symbol, and transformative power.

In the Torah, the physicality of sacrifice is central. The literal shedding of blood, the burning of flesh, the pouring of oil—these acts are not arbitrary. They symbolize atonement, thanksgiving, and restoration. But beyond the mechanics, the prophets often call attention to the heart behind the offering. "For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6). This tension between external ritual and internal sincerity reveals that the act, while necessary, is not sufficient without the proper spirit. The Sabbath, too, is a literal cessation of labor, but it embodies trust in divine provision and a weekly re-centering of the soul. Festivals mark historical truths, yet also reawaken communal identity and gratitude.

In Christianity, the rituals shift from temple-based acts to symbolic participations in the story of Jesus. Baptism, literally involving water, enacts death and rebirth—dying to the old self and rising into new life. It is not simply washing; it is an embodied proclamation of transformation. Communion, in its literal bread and wine, points to the body and blood of Christ, invoking memory, sacrifice, and shared identity. Yet these simple elements also carry mystery: they connect believers across time, invite examination of conscience, and unite the community in grace. Even when the acts are repeated routinely, their meanings renew inward conviction and belonging.

The Qur'an's rituals are among the most detailed in form, but their spiritual dimension is equally emphasized. The five daily prayers are literal acts: bowing, reciting, facing a direction, adhering to time. Yet the Qur'an explains their purpose—prayer restrains from immorality and refines the heart (Surah 29:45). Fasting, while it entails abstaining from food and drink, is aimed at increasing *taqwā*, God-consciousness. The Qur'an warns against fasting merely for show or hardship; the true fast humbles the soul and turns attention inward. Zakāt, though a material transaction, purifies wealth and cultivates empathy. The pilgrimage, while composed of movements, echoes the journeys of prophets and symbolizes detachment, humility, and submission.

In each case, the literal act is never devoid of purpose. It is the shell through which meaning is delivered. When performed without spirit, ritual becomes empty; but when joined with sincerity, it becomes transformative. This balance is echoed in scripture repeatedly. Isaiah criticizes hollow sacrifice; Jesus rebukes those who honor God with lips but not hearts; the Qur'an declares that "neither their flesh nor their blood reaches Allah, but it is the piety from you that reaches Him" (Surah 22:37).

Thus, the literal and the spiritual are not in conflict—they are joined. The body obeys so the soul may awaken. Hands, lips, and feet perform what the heart affirms. Rituals, whether ancient sacrifices, communal feasts, sacred meals, or daily prayers, translate belief into behavior. They do not replace inward faith, but they give it form—disciplining desire, remembering covenant, and enacting worship in a world that often forgets the unseen.

The question of who performs religious rituals—and for what purpose—draws a line between what is prescribed in sacred texts and how those prescriptions have been carried forward, expanded, or reshaped through tradition. Each of the three Abrahamic scriptures defines ritual performance to varying degrees, but the role of human agents—priests, believers, prophets, or

communities—often shifts in emphasis when compared to the religious practices that developed in their names. This divergence between the original text and evolving tradition reveals how authority, access, and intent have been negotiated over time.

In the Torah, ritual performance is explicitly assigned to the priestly class—the sons of Aaron, the Levites, and the appointed High Priest. Sacrifices are not offered by individual worshipers directly, but through intermediaries trained in ritual purity and temple procedures. Leviticus and Numbers contain precise instructions on who may perform what, under what circumstances, and with what consecration. The people bring offerings, but only priests handle the sacred elements, enter the holy spaces, or pronounce ritual blessings. The purpose is clear: to maintain covenantal purity, to atone for sin, and to preserve God's presence among the people. Over time, however, especially after the destruction of the Second Temple, rabbinic tradition reoriented worship toward prayer, study, and ethical observance. With no altar or priesthood functioning as in the biblical model, the ritual burden shifted to daily personal and communal acts, managed by rabbinic authority rather than hereditary priests.

In Christianity, ritual authority begins with Jesus and extends to his disciples, but undergoes different interpretations depending on denomination and era. In the New Testament, Jesus institutes baptism and communion but does not prescribe detailed procedural rules or designate a ritual caste. The early church, particularly in the Acts and Pauline letters, presents a community-based model, where elders and apostles perform baptisms and preside over the Lord's Supper, but all believers are called "a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9). Yet as Christianity institutionalized, especially in the Roman and Eastern traditions, ordained clergy emerged—bishops, priests, deacons—entrusted with safeguarding the sacraments. The reasons extended beyond liturgical form; they were seen as preservers of apostolic continuity and doctrinal purity. While the text permits broad participation, tradition increasingly narrowed the role of ritual leaders, placing key acts like Eucharist and absolution within clerical control. In contrast, some later movements like the Reformation re-emphasized the text's original openness, asserting that all believers could approach God directly, reducing or eliminating priestly mediation.

The Qur'an stands apart in that it does not institute a priestly class at all. Rituals such as prayer, fasting, zakāt, and pilgrimage are direct commands from God to each believer. The Qur'anic language consistently addresses individuals and the collective community, not a specialized spiritual elite. "Establish prayer and give zakāt" is spoken to all. Leadership in congregational prayer (imāmah) is not restricted by lineage or clerical ordination but is based on knowledge, piety, and community trust. However, Islamic tradition over time developed roles such as imams, scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*), and jurists, who provided legal rulings and led public rituals. Still, these roles do not function as intermediaries. The Qur'an's insistence on personal accountability and direct access to worship persists. Even the hajj is performed by millions individually, without priestly facilitation, guided by the text and prophetic example.

This contrast between text and tradition shows how worship evolves in structure and meaning. In the Torah, ritual is centralized and hierarchical. In Christianity, it begins

communally but often becomes clerical. In Islam, it remains distributed and individual. Yet in each, the underlying reasons for ritual—obedience, remembrance, atonement, submission—remain anchored in the sacred text. The who and the how may shift, but the why echoes across time: to bring the human closer to the divine, through action that reflects reverence, sincerity, and trust in the sacred path.

Women and Their Roles

In the Hebrew Bible, women appear not only as supporting figures in patriarchal narratives but as central agents of continuity, decision, and moral influence. While the text often reflects the social hierarchies of its time, a literal reading reveals moments where women shape destiny, direct the course of covenantal history, and serve as spiritual and communal anchors. They are matriarchs, judges, prophets, and protectors of lineage—not merely bystanders but vital participants in the unfolding story of Israel.

The matriarchs—Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah—are more than the wives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Their personal decisions, rivalries, and acts of faith directly influence the formation of the Israelite people. Sarah laughs at the promise of a child but later gives birth to Isaac, securing the covenantal line. Rebekah engineers Jacob's blessing over Esau, altering the path of inheritance and shaping the future of two nations. Rachel and Leah, through their competition and devotion, build the house of Israel through their sons, the tribal patriarchs. These stories show that women are not passive vessels of fertility but active agents of divine promise.

Deborah stands as a rare and striking figure of leadership. She is a judge, prophetess, and military strategist. In Judges 4–5, she commands Barak to rise against Sisera and delivers divine guidance in the process. The Song of Deborah immortalizes her role not just as a leader but as one who galvanizes Israel in a time of chaos. Her presence in the text challenges later assumptions that spiritual authority was reserved for men.

Other women also shape the narrative through moral clarity and courage. Abigail, in 1 Samuel 25, intervenes to prevent David from committing bloodshed, displaying intelligence, tact, and righteousness. Her actions lead to peace and ultimately to her becoming David's wife. Esther, though from a later text, offers perhaps the most complete picture of female heroism. Her role in saving her people from annihilation is rooted in strategic risk, eloquence, and faith. "For such a time as this," she enters the king's court and alters history.

Even unnamed women reflect spiritual insight. The mother of Samson negotiates divine instruction and dedicates her son as a Nazirite. The wise woman of Tekoa confronts David with moral clarity. Women at times intercede between kings and prophets, diffuse conflict, and call attention to injustice.

Nevertheless, the text also presents the realities of a male-dominated society. Inheritance laws favor sons, and women's legal testimonies are often secondary. Yet these limitations coexist

with moments of recognition and divine engagement. Hagar, the Egyptian servant, receives a direct theophany in the wilderness, and God names her son Ishmael. Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2 becomes a model of worship, echoed in later traditions. Ruth's loyalty and courage bring her into the line of David, and by extension, into the messianic lineage.

Thus, the Hebrew Bible's women occupy complex roles: constrained by social norms, yet empowered in moments of divine purpose. They are not portrayed as theological abstractions but as fully human—wise, flawed, faithful, and brave. Through them, covenant is carried, wisdom is voiced, and justice often emerges. Their literal stories serve not just as background to the male prophets and kings, but as foundational pillars in the story of God's people.

The New Testament presents a layered and sometimes contrasting picture of women's roles in the early Christian community. On one hand, the Gospels depict women as loyal followers of Jesus, often more perceptive and faithful than the male disciples. On the other hand, the epistles—particularly those attributed to Paul—contain instructions that appear to restrict women's public roles within the church. A literal reading of the text requires attention to both dimensions: the historical presence of active female disciples and the apostolic directives that shaped emerging church structures.

In the Gospels, women are portrayed with remarkable prominence and dignity. Mary, the mother of Jesus, is central from the opening chapters of Matthew and Luke. Her acceptance of divine will—"Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38)—establishes her as a model of faith and submission. Elizabeth, Anna the prophetess, and the women who minister to Jesus throughout his public life form a recurring presence that affirms women's spiritual insight and faithfulness.

Most striking is the role of women in the resurrection narratives. All four Gospels agree that women were the first witnesses to the empty tomb. Mary Magdalene appears in each account, and in John's Gospel she is the first to see the risen Christ and is commissioned to announce his resurrection to the disciples. This act—being entrusted with the core message of the Christian faith—places her in a unique apostolic role, even if the term is not formally used.

In the early church, women served as hosts, patrons, deacons, and co-laborers. Acts 16 introduces Lydia, a wealthy merchant in Philippi who becomes the first European convert and offers her home as a base for missionary work. Priscilla, mentioned alongside her husband Aquila, is involved in teaching the learned Apollos "the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:26). Romans 16 lists numerous women: Phoebe, a deacon and benefactor; Junia, identified by many early manuscripts as "outstanding among the apostles"; and others like Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis, described as laborers in the Lord. These mentions show that women were not peripheral but engaged in leadership, teaching, and ministry.

However, Paul's letters also contain passages that limit or qualify women's roles in worship and authority. In 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, he writes that women should remain silent in churches and ask their questions at home. In 1 Timothy 2:12, he declares, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man." These verses have been interpreted in various ways—some read them as universal commands, others as responses to specific local

issues. Yet taken literally, they present a vision of church order where male leadership is prioritized and women's participation is circumscribed.

At the same time, Paul also acknowledges that women pray and prophesy in church, as seen in 1 Corinthians 11, which provides guidelines for how women should appear when engaging in public worship. This suggests not a blanket silence, but a regulated form of participation. The tension between inclusion and restriction reflects a transitional period in the early Christian movement—caught between its radical message and the norms of Greco-Roman society.

Thus, the New Testament portrays women as indispensable in Jesus' ministry and in the growth of the church, yet also subject to institutional roles that evolved under apostolic instruction. Female disciples, benefactors, prophets, and evangelists appear throughout the text, showing that spiritual authority and devotion were not limited by gender. However, the epistolary texts complicate that picture with regulations that shaped ecclesial order for centuries. In both presence and limitation, the New Testament texts reflect an early church negotiating its identity in relation to both divine calling and cultural expectation.

In the Qur'an, women are addressed directly and repeatedly as moral agents, accountable for their faith, deeds, and character alongside men. While the text is revealed in a 7th-century Arabian context with its own social structure, the Qur'an introduces a framework in which women are recognized not merely in relation to men—as daughters, wives, or mothers—but as believers, thinkers, and actors in their own right. A literal reading of the Qur'an reveals women fulfilling roles as witnesses, participants in covenant, models of piety, and even sources of leadership and correction in the divine narrative.

One of the central affirmations of gender parity in the Qur'an occurs in verses like Surah 33:35, which lists believing men and believing women side by side through ten moral and spiritual qualities—"The Muslim men and Muslim women, the believing men and believing women… the fasting men and fasting women… the men who remember God much and the women who remember God much—God has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward." This symmetrical formulation affirms that divine reward and accountability are equal for both sexes. Worship, ethics, and spiritual proximity to God are not filtered through gender distinction.

In legal and social matters, the Qur'an assigns specific functions to women, including as witnesses. In Surah 2:282, regarding financial contracts, it states that two women may be called as witnesses in place of one man, "so that if one of the women errs, the other can remind her." While this has often been interpreted as a limitation, the text nonetheless recognizes the authority of women's testimony in legal matters—something far from universally acknowledged in the context of its revelation.

The Qur'an includes named and unnamed women whose actions carry spiritual authority and whose stories are part of prophetic history. Mary (Maryam), uniquely, has an entire chapter titled after her and is the only woman mentioned by name. She is described as "chosen above the women of all nations" (Surah 3:42) and is portrayed as a devoted servant of God, a virgin

mother, and a woman of deep resolve and divine support. Her narrative includes direct dialogue with angels and with God, making her one of the most spiritually elevated figures in the Qur'anic text.

Other women include the wife of Pharaoh, who is praised for her faith under oppression: "My Lord, build for me near You a house in Paradise" (Surah 66:11). She is held up as a model for believers, regardless of gender. The Queen of Sheba (Bilqis) is also featured prominently in Surah 27. She is shown as a wise and diplomatic ruler who ultimately submits to God after recognizing the signs brought by Solomon. Her leadership, consultation with advisers, and independent decision-making are affirmed within the narrative, showing that authority and faith can co-exist in female governance.

The Qur'an does not designate a separate female priesthood or formal spiritual hierarchy, but it continually calls upon women as individuals to believe, obey, strive, and reflect. In Surah 9:71, it declares that "The believing men and the believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong." This framing positions women as active participants in communal ethics and spiritual responsibility.

Marriage, motherhood, and modesty are also addressed extensively, but not at the exclusion of broader roles. The text recognizes the biological and social differences between men and women but upholds the principle of justice, kindness, and mutual consultation in relationships. Surah 4:1 calls upon all of humanity to "fear your Lord, who created you from a single soul and created from it its mate."

While interpretations of the Qur'an have varied across cultures and centuries, the literal content of the text provides a foundation where women are seen as complete moral beings, capable of leadership, devotion, and engagement with divine guidance. They are witnesses to truth, participants in covenant, and examples for both men and women to follow. The Qur'anic view of women, when read on its own terms, offers dignity, accountability, and spiritual equality embedded within a structured yet morally conscious revelation.

The Qur'an outlines specific directives concerning women in matters of personal conduct, legal status, and family life. These directives—particularly regarding veiling, inheritance, and marriage—are conveyed as literal commands, often introduced by phrases such as "Say" or "God has prescribed." These verses are embedded in the socio-legal framework of seventh-century Arabia, yet they form the foundation for enduring principles in Islamic jurisprudence and personal ethics. A literal reading of these verses reveals a mixture of legal precision and moral reasoning, offering both boundaries and rights within a clearly defined social order.

Veiling, often discussed in contemporary discourse, is addressed directly in two Qur'anic verses. In Surah 24:31, believing women are instructed to "draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their adornment except what is apparent." The context is one of modesty and visual privacy, intended to regulate the public display of beauty. In Surah 33:59, the Prophet is told, "O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to bring down over themselves part of their outer garments. That is more suitable that they will be known and not be abused." This verse links clothing to public recognition and protection,

indicating a practical and symbolic function. These verses do not specify exact garments, but they establish the principle of modest presentation as a literal obligation rooted in religious identity.

On the subject of inheritance, the Qur'an is unusually specific, providing mathematical allocations for various relatives. Surah 4:11–12 lays out detailed shares: a son receives a portion equal to that of two daughters, while parents, spouses, and siblings are also assigned fixed percentages depending on the circumstances. The rationale provided is not cultural but divine: "These are the limits set by God." The command is literal and prescriptive, ensuring women receive a defined portion of inheritance—something that marked a legal revolution at the time of revelation. While men often receive more due to financial responsibilities within the family structure, the very inclusion of women in the inheritance system is a significant textual command.

Marriage regulations are similarly precise. Surah 4:3 permits Muslim men to marry up to four women, "if you fear that you will not deal justly with the orphans, then marry those that please you… two, three, or four; but if you fear that you will not be just, then [marry] only one." The emphasis on justice is critical—the verse allows plural marriage only on condition of fairness, and later in Surah 4:129 it is acknowledged that "you will never be able to be equal between wives, even if you should strive." The Qur'an also prohibits forced marriage and recognizes women's consent: "Do not inherit women against their will" (Surah 4:19). Furthermore, the mahr—an obligatory gift from the groom to the bride—is a contractual right explicitly commanded in Surah 4:4: "Give the women their dowries graciously."

The Qur'an also limits whom one can marry. Surah 4:22–24 lists forbidden relationships: mothers, daughters, sisters, and others in close kinship. These are not suggestions but legal boundaries. Divorce, too, is regulated with procedural fairness and waiting periods. Surah 2:231 commands, "Do not retain them [your wives] to harm them so that you transgress." This shows that even when marital ties are severed, ethical treatment remains a divine obligation.

A literal reading of these passages makes clear that the Qur'an's approach to family and gender-related matters is detailed, command-driven, and morally framed. The goal is not only to create order but to safeguard dignity, prevent exploitation, and establish clarity. While interpretation and implementation have varied across cultures, the text itself offers concrete instructions grounded in divine justice and human responsibility. These commands form the legal and ethical core of Muslim domestic life, balancing societal norms with moral intent, always under the premise that God's laws aim at fairness, protection, and spiritual integrity.

The sacred texts of the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Qur'an each speak about women in ways that reflect both the cultural realities of their time and the theological principles they seek to express. A literal reading reveals a complex interplay between respect and restriction—between verses that honor women's spiritual status and those that delineate their roles within societal frameworks. This duality gives rise to a tension that remains a defining feature of scriptural discourse on gender: women are elevated in moral and symbolic language, yet often circumscribed in function and authority.

In the Hebrew Bible, the language surrounding women oscillates between celebration and containment. The matriarchs are spoken of with reverence, often as vessels of divine promise and covenantal continuity. Proverbs 31 presents the "woman of valor" as wise, industrious, and noble, a portrait of respect that transcends mere domesticity. Yet, laws in the Torah also include gendered limitations—women in matters of inheritance, testimony, and priestly service are often placed under male guardianship or excluded entirely. Levitical purity laws treat female bodies as sites of ritual vulnerability, introducing restrictions that shaped daily life. The respect accorded to figures like Deborah or Hannah exists within a broader legal framework that places defined limits on women's social and religious functions.

The New Testament mirrors this tension. Women are among the first and most faithful followers of Jesus, and they are remembered in the Gospels with admiration. Mary Magdalene is the first to witness the resurrection. Phoebe, Priscilla, Lydia, and Junia are mentioned as leaders and benefactors in the early church. Yet Paul's letters include language that appears restrictive: women are told to remain silent in assemblies, to submit to male authority, and to refrain from teaching over men. While these passages are often qualified by context or balanced by other acknowledgments of female spiritual gifts, they have been read literally to enforce centuries of exclusion from clerical roles. The New Testament thus speaks both the language of inclusion and of order, with a simultaneous honoring of female discipleship and a reinforcing of ecclesial boundaries.

The Qur'an likewise balances respect and regulation. Women are directly addressed and included in the spiritual community: believing men and believing women are repeatedly described as equal in moral and eschatological value. Mary is the only woman named in the text and is praised more explicitly than in any other scripture. The Qur'an includes women in its praise of the faithful and its condemnation of the wicked, using parallel language to affirm shared human accountability. At the same time, the Qur'an sets gender-specific guidelines in matters of dress, inheritance, testimony, and social interaction. These do not frame women as inferior but do create functional distinctions that often limit autonomy. For example, the allowance of two female witnesses in place of one male in certain financial contexts, or the unequal shares in inheritance, are examples of literal restrictions that coexist with rhetorical respect.

Throughout all three scriptures, the contrast between the elevation of women in narrative and moral terms and the limitation of women in legal and institutional terms remains pronounced. The language of respect often emerges in stories—honoring the courage, faith, or wisdom of women—while the language of restriction appears in legal codes or organizational structures. Yet both forms are integral to the text, suggesting that neither voice should be read in isolation.

Ultimately, the sacred texts speak in a dual register. They uphold women as vital, honorable, and spiritually equal, even as they articulate a social order that often bounds their roles. This coexistence of veneration and limitation reflects the deep entwinement of divine message and human context—a tension that has shaped centuries of interpretation, reform, and debate. The literal text honors women repeatedly, even as it draws borders around their participation. The

challenge lies not in denying either voice, but in recognizing how both have lived together in the scriptural tradition.

Divine Names and Their Power

In the Hebrew Bible, the names of God are not mere labels; they are revelations—conduits of divine presence, authority, and mystery. Each name carries a distinct aspect of God's character, reflecting the sacred reality it attempts to convey. The most central and ineffable of these is the Tetragrammaton, YHWH, regarded as the personal name of the God of Israel. This name, revealed to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3:14, is rooted in the Hebrew verb "to be," conveying self-existence, timelessness, and unbounded being: "I am that I am." It is a name so holy that Jewish tradition forbids its pronunciation aloud, replacing it with *Adonai* (Lord) during liturgical reading, or *HaShem* (The Name) in everyday speech.

YHWH appears over 6,000 times in the Hebrew Bible, marking it as the primary covenantal name of God. It signifies God's faithfulness, creative power, and moral authority. Its placement in the text often denotes moments of personal relationship, divine promise, or moral imperative. Yet its pronunciation has been lost to history, a fact not accidental but deeply theological—the name is unutterable, reflecting God's transcendence and otherness.

Alongside YHWH are other divine names that serve distinct functions. *El* is the oldest and most general term for God in the Hebrew Bible. It is a Semitic word shared with neighboring cultures, used both generically and specifically. Compound forms like *El Shaddai* (God Almighty), *El Elyon* (God Most High), and *El Olam* (Everlasting God) appear in the patriarchal narratives, reflecting attributes of power, supremacy, and eternal presence. These titles often accompany covenantal acts, such as God's blessing to Abraham or Jacob's encounter at Bethel.

Adonai, meaning "my Lord," is a title of reverence and substitution. It allows the reader to refer to God without uttering the divine name itself. It conveys dominion, majesty, and relational authority, underscoring the lordship of God over creation and Israel. In the Psalms, *Adonai* is invoked in prayers of dependence and praise, as in "Adonai is my shepherd," where the intimacy of God's care is merged with the solemnity of his rule.

Each divine name in the Hebrew Bible does more than describe; it acts. To speak the name of God is to invoke power, presence, and history. The Ten Commandments forbid taking God's name in vain not simply to avoid profanity but to prevent trivializing what is weighty and sacred. The name is bound to identity and memory: "This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations" (Exodus 3:15).

This sacred reverence also led to the scribal practice of using special markings, larger letters, or different ink colors when writing YHWH in Torah scrolls. The ineffability of the name shaped Jewish liturgy, theology, and mysticism, where speaking or contemplating the divine name becomes an act of spiritual ascent or purification.

Thus, in the Hebrew Bible, divine names are more than theological references—they are sacred thresholds. They define not just who God is, but how God is to be approached. They are words that carry weight, not to be spoken lightly, but to be known in awe, reverence, and covenantal trust. To name God is to enter a relationship, one shaped by holiness, fear, and faith.

In Christian scripture, the divine names and titles reflect not only God's nature but also the relational dynamics within the Christian understanding of the Trinity. Each name—Father, Son, Logos, and Spirit—functions as a theological declaration and an invitation into the mystery of divine communion. Unlike the ineffable name of YHWH in the Hebrew Bible, the Christian tradition places emphasis on God as revealed, knowable, and relational through these titles, each carrying deep theological significance rooted in both the Old and New Testaments.

The term “Father” is central to Jesus’ teaching and to the New Testament’s portrayal of God. It reflects both authority and intimacy. Jesus regularly addresses God as “Abba,” an Aramaic word for father that conveys warmth and closeness, yet retains reverence. In the Lord’s Prayer, believers are instructed to pray, “Our Father who art in heaven,” introducing a form of worship that unites divine sovereignty with personal access. The title affirms a God who is not distant or abstract, but one who relates to humanity as a parent to children—guiding, disciplining, protecting, and loving. This relational aspect is foundational to Christian theology, where God's fatherhood is extended not only to Christ but to all who believe through adoption.

“Son” refers explicitly to Jesus, identified as the Son of God. This term encompasses his divine origin, his unique relationship with the Father, and his role as mediator between God and humanity. The Gospels declare Jesus as the “beloved Son” in whom the Father is well pleased, and Paul refers to Jesus as “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15). The title “Son” does not imply biological generation but theological derivation—one with the Father in essence, yet distinct in person. This filial identity underpins doctrines of incarnation, atonement, and resurrection. To confess Jesus as the Son is to affirm his divine status and redemptive role.

“Logos,” meaning “Word,” is introduced in the prologue of the Gospel of John. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” This term connects Jesus with both creation and revelation. As Logos, Christ is the divine self-expression, the one through whom all things were made and in whom truth is made manifest. The use of Logos bridges Hebrew concepts of divine speech—such as God's creative command in Genesis—with Greek philosophical notions of rational order and meaning. The Logos becomes flesh, according to John 1:14, bringing divine presence into human history. This fusion of language and personhood underscores the Christian claim that God is not only revealed through speech but has embodied that revelation in Jesus.

“Spirit,” or Holy Spirit, completes the triune expression of God’s presence. The Spirit is described as the breath or wind of God, active from Genesis through Revelation. In the New Testament, the Spirit descends upon Jesus at baptism, fills the apostles at Pentecost, and

indwells believers to guide, comfort, and empower. The Spirit is called the "Spirit of truth," the "Helper," and the one who teaches and reminds followers of all that Jesus commanded. The Spirit is not an impersonal force but is treated as a distinct person of the Godhead—sent, received, and grieved. The name "Holy Spirit" thus encapsulates divine immanence and sanctifying presence.

Together, these names—Father, Son, Logos, Spirit—form the vocabulary of Christian worship and theology. They are not mere titles but relational signposts pointing to a God who is both transcendent and near, infinite and personal. Each name carries doctrinal weight, shaping how Christians understand divine identity, communicate with God, and experience salvation. Through them, God is not only named but known, approached through prayer, and encountered in life. The Christian use of divine names thus opens a pathway of reverence, relationship, and revelation, grounding belief in the mystery of unity and distinction within the divine.

The Qur'an presents the divine name as a central axis of belief, reverence, and reflection. The primary name used throughout the text is *Allah*—a unique, untranslatable term referring exclusively to the singular God of creation, judgment, and mercy. Unlike generic terms such as *El* or *Theos* in Hebrew and Greek, *Allah* is not a title but a proper name, encompassing the fullness of divine essence and being. It appears over 2,500 times in the Qur'an, often fronting commands, revelations, and descriptions that affirm absolute sovereignty. The term is linguistically rooted in the Arabic for "the God" (*al-ilah*), but in Qur'anic usage, it transcends category, identity, and plurality. Allah is One, without rival, image, or associate—a core concept expressed repeatedly and literally: "Say: He is Allah, the One" (Surah 112:1).

This singularity—*tawḥīd*—is the foundation of Qur'anic theology. Allah is not part of a trinity, nor does He beget or is begotten. Surah 112, known as *al-Ikhlāṣ*, encapsulates this reality with clarity: "He neither begets nor is born, nor is there to Him any equivalent." This insistence on God's absolute oneness and incomparability stands as a literal and theological dividing line between Islam and the Christian and Jewish scriptures' varying depictions of divine plurality or personification.

Yet while *Allah* is One, the Qur'an unfolds the divine reality through numerous attributes. These are known as the *Asma' al-Ḥusnā*, or the Most Beautiful Names. Traditionally listed as 99, though the Qur'an does not fix this number, these names are drawn from the text itself, appearing in phrases such as "And to Allah belong the Most Beautiful Names, so call upon Him by them" (Surah 7:180). Each name reveals a dimension of divine character: *Ar-Raḥmān* (The Most Merciful), *Al-Ḥakīm* (The Wise), *Al-ʿAlīm* (The All-Knowing), *Al-Qahhār* (The Subduer), *Al-Ghafūr* (The Forgiving). These names are not decorative or symbolic—they serve both theological and devotional purposes. Believers are urged to reflect on them, invoke them in supplication, and embody their ethical echoes in conduct.

Each name corresponds to a divine attribute but never fragments the unity of Allah. They do not suggest separate beings or divine persons but function as facets of a single, indivisible essence. Allah is simultaneously Just and Merciful, Near and Transcendent, Creator and

Sustainer. The names also provide a linguistic bridge between divine majesty (*jalāl*) and beauty (*jamāl*), encompassing both fear and hope, awe and intimacy.

Importantly, the Qur'an cautions against altering or misapplying these names. Associating others with Allah, even in worship or intercession, is condemned as *shirk*, the gravest sin in Islam. "Do not set up with Allah any other god" (Surah 17:22). The strict monotheism of the Qur'an excludes all forms of divine multiplication or mediation. Even prophets are not divine—they are chosen servants. The names belong to Allah alone, and to use them properly is to affirm His unity, sovereignty, and perfection.

The names are also woven into the daily life of believers. From prayers to oaths, remembrance to ethics, the divine names permeate every aspect of Muslim devotion. Reciting *Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*—"In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate"—marks the beginning of all sacred and mundane acts alike. Each name serves as both invocation and orientation, drawing the believer closer to the divine while reinforcing the boundaries of correct belief.

Thus, in the Qur'an, the name *Allah* and the divine attributes combine to form a structure of sacred language that is clear, ordered, and monotheistically unyielding. The literal text permits no ambiguity: God is One, with many names but no partners, no image, and no intermediaries. His names are keys to knowledge, worship, and humility. To know these names is to approach the threshold of divine presence; to misuse them is to blur the essential line between Creator and creation.

The way the divine is invoked across the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Qur'an reveals both linguistic reverence and theological worldview. Invocation—calling upon God by name—is more than an act of speech; it is a declaration of relationship, submission, and expectation. Each scripture embeds invocation into its language of prayer, praise, and supplication, yet the tone, terms, and structure of that language differ significantly, shaped by the name being called and the theological contours surrounding it.

In the Hebrew Bible, invocation language is solemn and often covenantal. Names such as *YHWH*, *El Shaddai*, and *Adonai* are employed not only to address God but to ground the act of calling in divine authority and historical faithfulness. When the psalmist cries, "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" (Psalm 8:1), the repetition of divine titles conveys awe and personal devotion. Invocations often recall past acts: "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" is a formula that binds the present moment to ancestral covenant. Invoking God in the Hebrew Bible involves remembrance, fear, trust, and often a direct plea for intervention. The divine name is called upon in blessings, oaths, and acts of national repentance, yet with strict boundaries. Misusing the divine name—invoking it vainly or falsely—is forbidden in the Ten Commandments, emphasizing the power and danger of divine speech.

In the New Testament, invocation shifts toward relational intimacy. Jesus teaches his disciples to begin prayer with "Our Father," a form that combines reverence with access. The name of Jesus becomes central in Christian invocation: "In the name of Jesus Christ of

Nazareth, rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6). The phrase "in Jesus' name" becomes the formula for prayer, healing, baptism, and teaching. This shift reflects the Christian belief that access to God is mediated through Christ. The invocation of "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" defines both liturgy and theology. Paul writes, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13), echoing prophetic language while applying it to Jesus. The name is not only sacred but salvific, carrying divine power that believers are called to trust and proclaim. Yet reverence remains: "Hallowed be thy name" preserves the sense of sanctity even in the context of intimacy.

In the Qur'an, invocation is both a daily act and a spiritual discipline. The most frequent invocation begins with the phrase *Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*—"In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate." This phrase precedes nearly every chapter of the Qur'an and is used by Muslims to sanctify actions both mundane and sacred. It reflects the constant orientation of life toward divine remembrance. The practice of *dhikr*, or remembrance, involves the repeated vocalization of divine names—*Subḥān Allāh*, *Al-ḥamdu lillāh*, *Allāhu Akbar*—each a form of invocation with deep theological resonance. The Qur'an commands believers to "Call upon Allah or call upon the Most Merciful—whichever [name] you call, to Him belong the best names" (Surah 17:110). Invocation here is not merely expressive; it is formative, reshaping the soul through repetition and mindfulness. Yet the Qur'an warns against invoking God without knowledge or in distraction: the name of Allah must be used with sincerity and awareness.

Across all three scriptures, invocation reveals both access and distance. The divine name is a bridge, but also a threshold. It invites relationship but demands reverence. Whether in the lament of a Hebrew prophet, the prayers of early Christians, or the Qur'anic command to remember Allah constantly, invocation is central to the human-divine encounter. The literal language used—whether formal, familial, or majestic—shapes not just theology but the posture of the worshiper: bowed in awe, raised in hope, and rooted in speech that seeks to approach the sacred.

The literal usage of divine names in prayer and religious identity across the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Qur'an is foundational, shaping not only how the divine is approached but how believers understand themselves in relation to the sacred. The names are not ornamental or poetic embellishments; they are declarations of truth, frames of theology, and anchors of communal and personal identity. To pray using a divine name is to step into a defined relationship. To carry that name in speech or self-designation is to align one's being with a divine reality that transcends human constructs.

In the Hebrew Bible, the invocation of God's name in prayer—whether as YHWH, El, or Adonai—marks a direct encounter with the divine covenant. Moses speaks to God using His revealed name, and prophets cry out invoking that same name as both plea and protest. The Psalms are filled with literal usage of divine titles: "Give thanks to the name of the Lord," "Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and forevermore." The name becomes a source of protection—"The name of the Lord is a strong tower"—and also a standard of holiness. Israel is repeatedly reminded that they are called by God's name, set apart from

other nations. Priests bless the people “in the name of the Lord,” and even sacred places are described as bearing His name. Thus, in literal prayer, God's name is both the means of communication and the emblem of identity for the community of Israel.

In the New Testament, the name of Jesus becomes central to prayer and self-understanding. Believers pray “in Jesus’ name” not as a phrase of ritual closure but as an invocation of authority and intercession. Jesus himself prays to the Father and teaches disciples to approach God as children to a parent, but always with acknowledgment of divine sanctity: “Hallowed be thy name.” The identity of the early Christian community is bound up in the name of Christ—they are called “Christians” in Acts, and Paul speaks of being “baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.” Prayer becomes a space where divine titles are directly linked to saving power and communal unity. “At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow,” Paul writes in Philippians, emphasizing the literal and eschatological significance of the name. In both prayer and self-definition, to bear the name of Jesus is to live under his lordship and within his redemptive act.

In the Qur’an, the name of Allah is not just a word to be spoken—it is a truth to be lived. Every act of devotion, whether prayer (*ṣalāh*), remembrance (*dhikr*), or daily intention, is linked to divine names. The Qur’an commands believers to call on Allah, and to invoke Him by His most beautiful names, which are used not only in formal prayers but in personal moments of gratitude, awe, or fear. The *shahāda*, the foundational testimony of Islamic faith, literally affirms identity through the name: “There is no god but Allah.” A Muslim is thus someone who declares, embodies, and acts in alignment with that name. The Qur’anic prayers often include names that reflect mercy, knowledge, power, and justice—reminders of who God is and what the believer seeks to emulate. The use of *Ar-Raḥmān*, *Al-Ghafūr*, *Al-ʿAzīz* in prayer shapes a theology where God is always accessible yet never reduced.

In each scripture, the divine name operates simultaneously in heaven and on earth—in the language of prayer and in the identity of the faithful. The literal use of the name creates a bond: between God and individual, God and community, God and creation. The reverence for the name defines the boundaries of worship; the repetition of the name reinforces spiritual memory; the carrying of the name into life marks the believer as one called into covenant, grace, or submission. Whether through the ineffable mystery of YHWH, the incarnate invocation of Jesus, or the encompassing singularity of Allah, the divine name is always more than sound—it is presence, power, and the echo of divine identity made known to those who call upon it.

One Origin, Many Tongues

As this comparative journey draws to a close, the literal divergences among the Hebrew Bible, the Christian Bible, and the Qur’an come into sharper focus—not as incidental variations but as structural differences rooted in distinct narrative frameworks, sacred vocabularies, and theological priorities. Though all three texts claim descent from the same

spiritual ancestry, often invoking Abraham, Adam, Moses, and a single Creator, the way each tells the story—and the very words it uses—reveal divergent understandings of human history, divine intention, and sacred truth.

In the Hebrew Bible, narrative is built around covenant and memory. Its language is dense with lineage, geography, law, and ritual. It tells stories through a lens of divine election, tribal identity, and moral consequence. God is named with both awe and intimacy, and sacred history is presented as a continuous struggle between fidelity and rebellion. The Hebrew Bible's literal mode is historical-legal and poetic-prophetic, with names, genealogies, laws, and promises forming the backbone of its theological architecture. Its divergences arise from the prioritization of national narrative and sacred obligation.

The Christian Bible reshapes that inherited narrative by presenting fulfillment through Christ. The New Testament reinterprets many Hebrew Bible passages, often allegorically or typologically. Literal language becomes charged with layered meanings: Adam becomes a symbol, Jesus the Word, and the Law a schoolmaster leading to grace. Miracles, parables, and epistles form the dominant modes of expression, and divine names shift from the unspoken YHWH to relational terms like Father, Son, and Spirit. Its divergences emerge not only in content—such as views on sin, salvation, or messiahship—but in how the text's literal statements are recontextualized to support theological claims of incarnation, resurrection, and redemptive sacrifice.

The Qur'an, in contrast, presents itself as a final, rectifying revelation. Its narrative voice is direct, often first-person, with Allah speaking through a precise and elevated Arabic form. Literal language in the Qur'an is preserved and guarded—designed to be recited, memorized, and interpreted within clear monotheistic boundaries. Where the Hebrew Bible includes human flaws in its prophets, and the New Testament centers on a divine-human savior, the Qur'an maintains prophetic purity and affirms a continuous but corrected line of revelation. Divergences arise sharply in creation stories, views of Jesus and Mary, concepts of sin and accountability, and even the names and roles of biblical figures. These are not slight adjustments but pointed re-statements of earlier accounts, presented in a different tongue and through a different theological filter.

Thus, the divergences are not only in what is said but in how, why, and to whom. Literal differences of sequencing, agency, divine speech, and human response reflect deep-rooted divergences in worldview. The same characters often speak with different words, make different choices, or appear in different moral light depending on the scripture. Words matter —whether spoken by God, recorded by scribes, preached by prophets, or recited by believers. The language of each book does not merely reflect belief; it shapes it, limits it, and makes it visible.

These literal divergences serve not to diminish any single text, but to illustrate the vast narrative terrain of Abrahamic faiths. One origin—shared in spiritual memory—has found voice in many tongues, each with its own rhythm, its own claims, and its own sacred logic. Through literal comparison, we see more clearly the paths these scriptures walk: parallel,

sometimes crossing, often divergent, yet all rooted in the search for truth, justice, and divine nearness.

Shared stories among the Hebrew Bible, the Christian Bible, and the Qur'an serve as bridges across traditions, preserving a common vocabulary of figures and events—Adam and Eve, Noah's flood, Abraham's test, Moses and Pharaoh, the Ten Commandments, and even the Last Judgment. Yet the same stories that seem to unite these texts in purpose and origin often conceal as much as they reveal. Beneath their familiar outlines lie profound differences in emphasis, tone, and theological intent. These divergences are not hidden merely in interpretation; they exist in the literal telling itself—in what is stated, what is left unsaid, and how the divine voice guides the narrative.

What the shared stories reveal is a universal human condition: the struggle between obedience and rebellion, the search for meaning, the need for guidance, and the hope of redemption. In all three texts, creation begins with divine intention. Humanity is given a role —whether dominion, vicegerency, or stewardship—and falls short. Prophets emerge to correct the path, calling people back to divine order. The flood purges corruption; the covenant binds a people; the law instructs; and divine mercy punctuates judgment. The narrative arc is recognizable across scriptures, suggesting an underlying moral and spiritual rhythm common to all three traditions.

But just as powerfully, these stories hide their differences beneath the familiarity of shared names. Adam is formed in Genesis with God's breath and made in His image; in the Qur'an, he is shaped from clay and lacks any divine imprint. Abraham is promised descendants in all texts, but who the sacrificial son is—and what the test signifies—varies sharply. Moses delivers divine law in each account, yet the Qur'an places him in intense verbal confrontations with Pharaoh, with far more emphasis on dialogue and miracles than in the Hebrew telling. Jesus, too, is a figure across all three, but what his role signifies—messiah, son of God, or prophet—is recast entirely depending on the text.

These divergences are not trivial; they are doctrinal. The same event may conceal theological commitments beneath its surface. In Genesis, Eve's creation from Adam and her role in the fall suggests an early commentary on gender and sin. In the Qur'an, such hierarchy and inherited blame are absent, replaced by mutual error and individual accountability. In the New Testament, shared stories such as Abraham's test or Moses' law are used to construct typologies that serve the theological claims of Christ's identity and mission. The literal words may echo older texts, but the framing redefines them.

Furthermore, what is not told is as revealing as what is. The Hebrew Bible does not mention Mary; the Qur'an devotes an entire chapter to her. The Qur'an omits any crucifixion narrative for Jesus, despite the New Testament placing it at the center of its theology. The Christian Gospels do not discuss Muhammad or later prophets, while the Qur'an critiques earlier communities for altering divine revelation. The gaps are not accidental; they are boundaries set by revelation, demarcating where one tradition ends and another begins.

Thus, the shared stories function like mirrors with different reflections. They reveal that humanity shares certain questions—about origin, justice, suffering, and salvation—but they also hide how differently these questions are answered. The literal narratives are not interchangeable even when the characters overlap. What unites them superficially often conceals the deep structures that distinguish one scripture's view of God, humanity, and history from another's.

In the end, the shared stories offer both a starting point for dialogue and a caution against oversimplification. They are familiar not because they mean the same thing in every text, but because they serve as recurring signs along three distinct theological paths. What they reveal is the enduring human desire to remember, to believe, and to belong. What they hide is how differently that memory, belief, and belonging are expressed when the same story is told through another tongue.

Translation and recitation are not secondary aspects of scripture; they are forces that shape how divine texts live, move, and embed themselves in the minds and hearts of their followers. Across the Hebrew Bible, the Christian Bible, and the Qur'an, the transmission of sacred language into spoken or written word has altered more than vocabulary—it has defined theology, access, and intimacy. What is preserved and what is lost in these acts of translation and recitation continues to affect how each scripture is experienced, interpreted, and revered.

The Hebrew Bible was composed primarily in ancient Hebrew, with a few portions in Aramaic. Its written form was tightly bound to its oral tradition, preserved with remarkable precision by scribes who counted letters, recorded margins, and maintained vocalization marks in the Masoretic texts centuries later. Reading aloud was integral to its function, especially in temple and synagogue settings, where the recitation of the Torah became a public declaration of covenant. Yet translation was never far from its survival. When Hebrew was no longer widely spoken among the diaspora, the Greek Septuagint emerged, offering the first major translation. But with translation came subtle shifts—word choices that echoed Hellenistic concepts, interpretations that bent original legal tones toward new philosophical understandings. The power of translation, while necessary, proved capable of bending the frame.

In Christianity, translation is central. The New Testament itself was written in Koine Greek—a language of commerce and empire—not in Aramaic, the spoken tongue of Jesus. From its beginning, the Christian message moved across linguistic borders. As scripture spread through Latin, Coptic, Syriac, and later vernacular tongues, it was re-encountered by new cultures and theological filters. Jerome's Latin Vulgate shaped Western Christianity for over a millennium, while Martin Luther's German Bible helped birth the Reformation by making scripture accessible to laypeople. In this tradition, translation is not only accepted—it is seen as a vehicle of divine mission. Yet, with each translation, theological nuance, wordplay, and cultural tone shift. "Logos" becomes "Word," but its layered resonance may dilute. The term "Son of God," familiar in Greek usage, enters languages where such filial metaphors bear radically different weight. Literal translation is never entirely literal; it is always interpretive.

The Qur'an stands apart in its approach. It is not merely a text; it is a recitation. The word *Qur'an* itself means "that which is recited," and its origin in oral delivery is not just historical—it is essential. Revealed in Arabic to the Prophet Muhammad and preserved through memorization and communal recitation, the Qur'an's sound, rhythm, and linguistic form are considered inseparable from its meaning. Any translation is viewed as an explanation of the Qur'an, not the Qur'an itself. The Arabic original remains the authoritative version in both worship and scholarship. Recitation (*tilāwah*) is an act of devotion, performed with rules of intonation (*tajwīd*) and with the belief that the very sound of the divine speech has power to heal, guide, and transform. This preservation of original language gives the Qur'an a singular consistency, but also poses barriers to access for those outside the linguistic tradition. Nonetheless, translations are widespread, and though not considered substitutes, they serve as bridges to understanding for millions of non-Arabic-speaking Muslims.

In all three traditions, recitation adds a spiritual dimension that reading alone does not capture. Spoken aloud, scripture becomes embodied—it breathes. It fills space, commands attention, and engages memory and emotion. Whether in the synagogue reading of the Torah, the liturgical chant of the Gospels, or the melodic recitation of the Qur'an, the sacred word becomes living through voice. Translation, in contrast, is the word made portable—adapted to new ears, but always carrying the risk of drift.

Thus, translation and recitation are twin powers: one makes the text accessible across tongues and times, the other roots it in its original form and resonance. Each scripture has negotiated these powers differently. The Hebrew Bible has preserved textual fidelity with layered oral tradition. The Christian Bible has embraced linguistic transformation as mission. The Qur'an has guarded original language as sacred sound. All three reveal that how a scripture is heard and understood is shaped not only by what it says, but by how it is said—and in what tongue the divine chooses to speak.

The question of whether textual convergence can lead to truth convergence lies at the heart of interfaith dialogue and comparative scripture studies. When the Hebrew Bible, the Christian Bible, and the Qur'an present overlapping narratives, characters, laws, or divine pronouncements, the similarities can appear to suggest a common spiritual truth—perhaps even a shared divine source. Yet convergence of text does not necessarily entail convergence of meaning or doctrine. What looks like unity on the surface may mask deeper fractures in theological vision, intent, and consequence.

At one level, textual convergence reveals a shared moral architecture. All three scriptures affirm the centrality of monotheism, the seriousness of moral choice, the sacredness of human life, and the necessity of divine guidance. They honor many of the same figures—Abraham, Moses, and others—not as myths but as real individuals placed within historical-religious timelines. This narrative overlap provides common ground for moral discourse and ethical alignment. It is why these traditions often stand united on questions of justice, compassion, and community, despite their theological divisions.

However, the moment convergence is pressed into a search for truth consensus, tensions emerge. A shared story does not mean shared theology. The binding of Abraham's son may

appear across all three texts, but its meaning is not the same. In Genesis, it tests Abraham's obedience and confirms the covenant with Isaac. In the New Testament, it prefigures the sacrifice of Christ. In the Qur'an, it tests submission, likely with Ishmael, and culminates not in death but in divine mercy and prophetic legacy. The story converges in event but diverges in meaning—and meaning is where doctrine resides.

Truth, in scripture, is not only about facts but about interpretation and ultimate claims. The New Testament asserts Jesus as the incarnate Word, crucified and risen; the Qur'an denies both divinity and crucifixion. These are not literary differences; they are foundational contradictions. The Hebrew Bible does not anticipate a divine messiah, and its promises unfold in national and legal forms. Thus, while texts may align in plot, they depart in purpose. The same divine name can be spoken with vastly different meanings behind it.

Still, convergence is not without value. It can create a space for shared recognition—a mutual acknowledgment that each tradition is wrestling with the same existential questions: Who is God? What is humanity's place in creation? What is the path to righteousness? Converging texts act as reflective surfaces, not as fusions. They show that the Abrahamic traditions did not arise in isolation but in response to each other, often correcting, affirming, or reinterpreting prior claims. The Qur'an, in particular, engages the earlier scriptures directly, naming the Torah and Gospel and critiquing their perceived alterations. This intertextual relationship itself is a form of convergence, even when it insists on theological departure.

Ultimately, whether textual convergence can lead to truth convergence depends on how one defines truth. If truth is understood as shared ethical orientation or reverence for the divine, then the overlap affirms a common direction. But if truth is defined by exclusive doctrinal claims—about the nature of God, the identity of prophets, or the means of salvation—then convergence of text may only deepen the divergence of belief.

In the end, the literal comparisons illuminate not a single truth, but multiple pathways that claim origin in a common source. The convergence is real, but it is not final. It invites dialogue, not dissolution of difference. The texts speak together, but they do not say the same thing. And that, perhaps, is the truest insight: that sacred speech, even when shared, points to truths not easily harmonized—but deeply worthy of understanding.

When the layers of doctrine are peeled away, when translation fades and commentary falls silent, what remains of scripture? What echoes across the Hebrew Bible, the Christian Bible, and the Qur'an when the sacred is no longer filtered through confessional claims or theological systems, but approached simply as language—bare, direct, and human? Stripped of institution and interpretation, what survives is not uniformity, but a kind of elemental resonance: the cadence of yearning, the gravity of command, the whisper of hope, and the human voice turned upward in awe.

Beyond doctrine, these texts remain as vessels of human confrontation with the unseen. A man alone in a garden, a woman crying out in childbirth, a prophet facing a king, a soul weighed on the scales—these are not mere theological illustrations, but moments of contact between the finite and the infinite. Even when God's identity is contested, His speech carries

similar tones: of warning, of mercy, of promise, of return. Whether one hears “I am who I am,” “This is my beloved Son,” or “Say: He is Allah, the One,” the form varies, but the impulse to speak from beyond the veil remains the same.

The structure of revelation itself—call and response, silence and speech, exile and return—mirrors the rhythms of human life. These scriptures preserve tears, judgments, and visions. They tell of floods and gardens, tables and tablets, fire and water, command and consolation. And beyond their words, they preserve a sense of orientation: that human beings are not self-sufficient, that language has limits, and that truth may exist beyond articulation. In this, they remain sacred even to the unbeliever—for they attempt the impossible, to name the unnamed, to speak the unspeakable.

When doctrine is suspended and the text is read as breath and word, what remains is the invocation. The repeated calling upon a presence: YHWH, Lord, Allah. The cry for meaning: “Why have you forsaken me?”, “Show us the straight path,” “Here I am.” These are not doctrines; they are positions of the soul. They are the posture of dependence, longing, and recognition. They are not claims to be tested, but conditions to be felt.

Stripped bare, the texts also expose their humanity. They are shaped by hunger and fear, by love and betrayal, by the search for justice and the ache of loss. They do not flinch from blood, doubt, or failure. They make room for lament as well as praise. They tell stories not just to teach, but to remember. In their most unadorned form, they are vessels of memory and imagination, carrying forward not only divine messages but human responses: obedience, protest, silence, and song.

Thus, beyond doctrine, what remains is the echo of the sacred through human speech. Not a single truth, but a shared impulse. Not theological clarity, but literary witness. And in that witness, a fragile but enduring flame: that in different tongues and centuries, people have listened, spoken, and believed that the Word, however named, was near.